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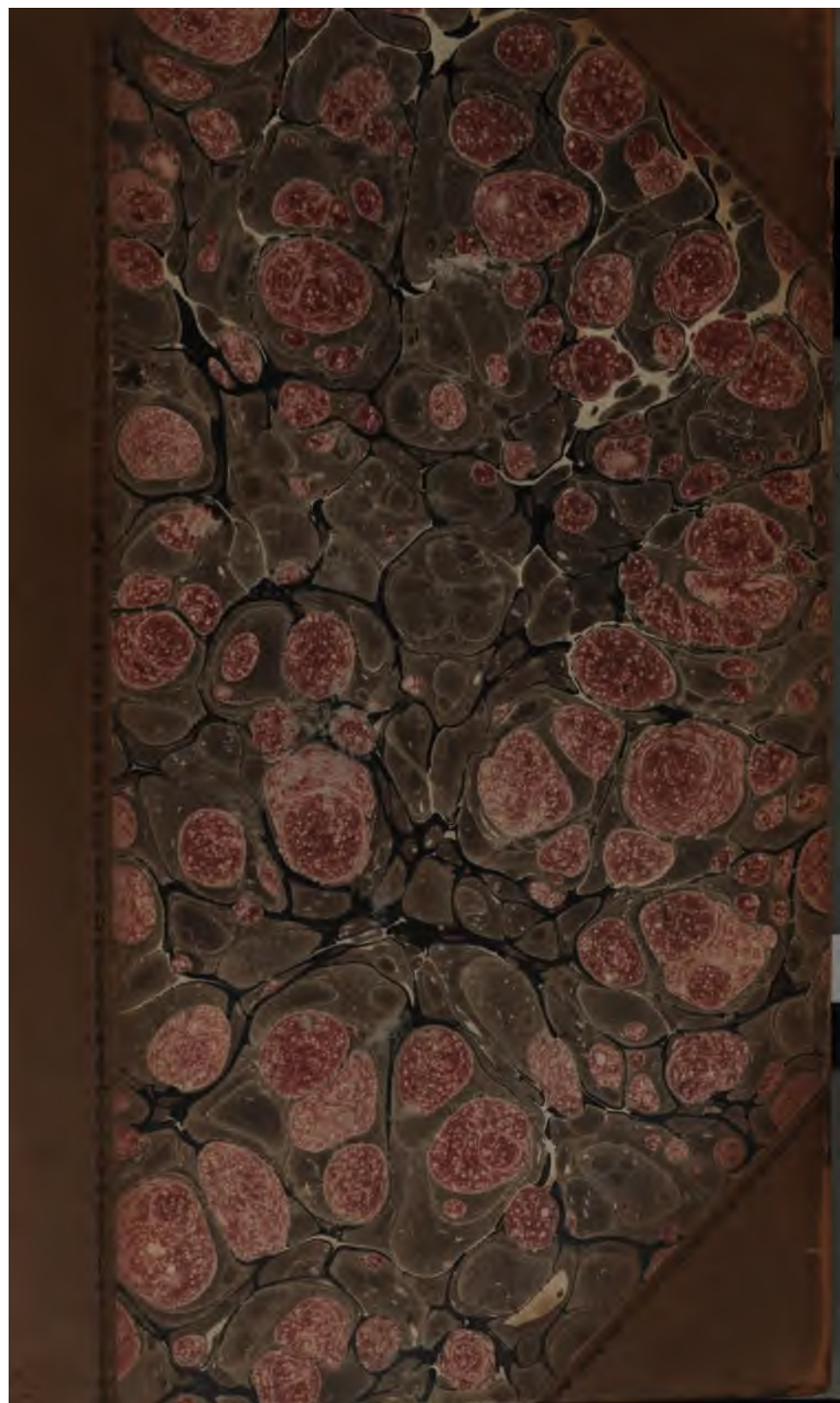
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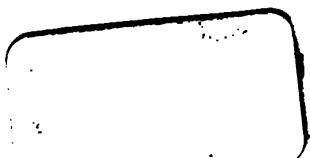




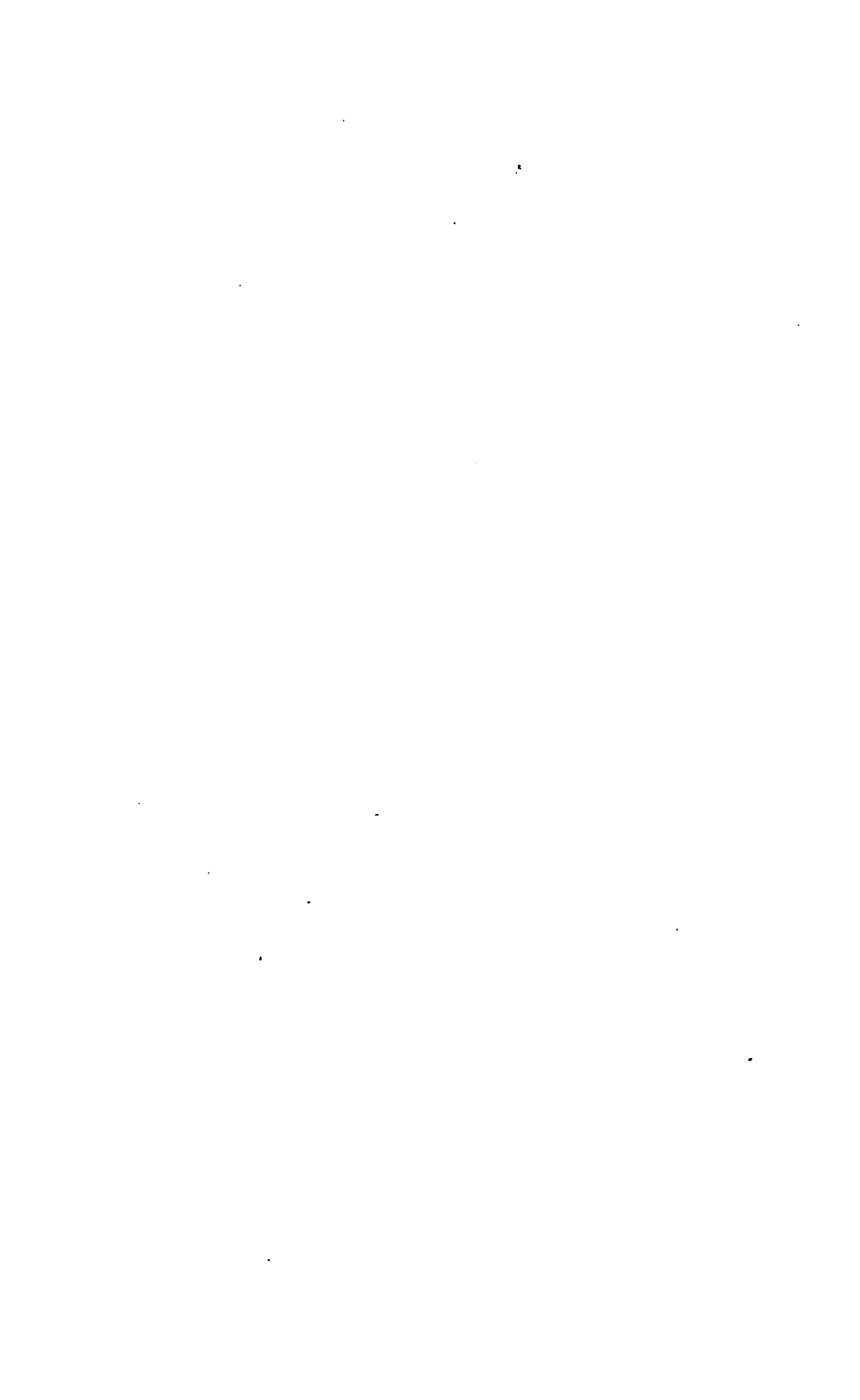
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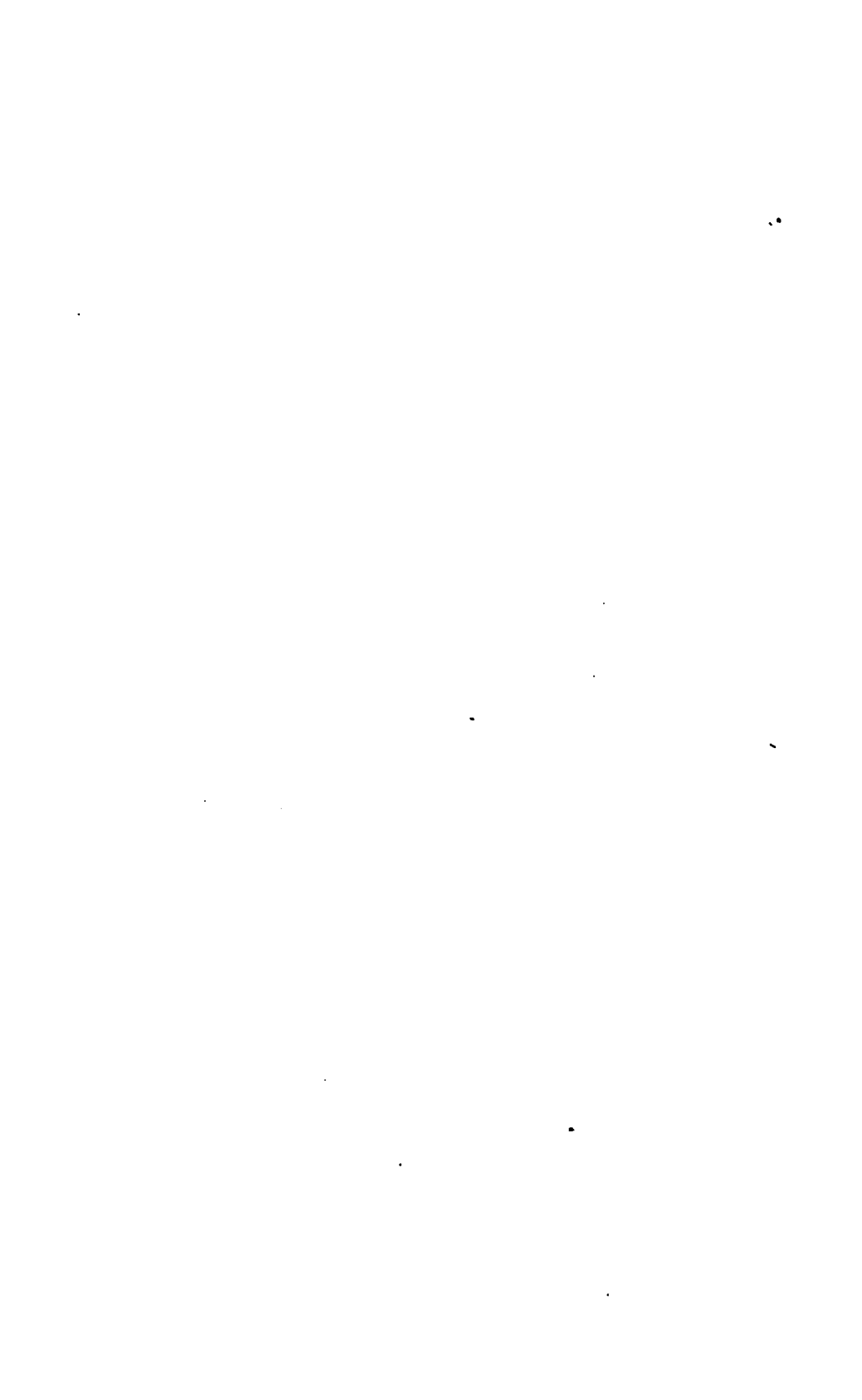
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THE
ORDINANCES OF RELIGION,
&c.



THE
ORDINANCES OF RELIGION
PRACTICALLY ILLUSTRATED
AND
APPLIED.

BY JOHN DAVIES, B. D.

RECTOR OF ST. PANCRAE, CHICHESTER,
AND
AUTHOR OF "AN ESTIMATE OF THE HUMAN MIND," &c.

"A neglect of the Ordinances of Religion of Divine appointment is the sure symptom of a criminal indifference about those higher duties, by which men pretend to atone for their omission."

BISHOP HORSLEY.

LONDON:
J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE tide of human opinion seldom flows for any length of time in one uniform direction. No sooner has it reached its extreme limit in any line of movement, than it begins a retrograde course, and, subject to the cross currents and various obstructions, by which its progress is liable to be interrupted, it travels with accelerated pace towards an opposite point of the compass. In the ordinary developement of the principles of human character, as exhibited upon the enlarged and comprehensive scale of history and social economy, the advancing flow of the ocean is not more certainly followed by a reflux, than a set of extreme opinions upon any great, difficult, and complex question is found to be speedily succeeded by a train of contrary ideas, equally perhaps wide of the truth, and at variance with established fact.

From this process of oscillation, religion, which under some of its manifold modifications can never be wholly separated from the thoughts, feelings, and affections of mankind, is not altogether exempt. In itself, indeed, as a combination of eternal and unalterable truths, it is fixed, absolute and immutable. In this respect, like the sun occupying its central position in the midst of surrounding worlds, religion does not vary its real

character and situation in accordance with the impulses of caprice or the mist, which ignorance and prejudice may occasionally throw around it. The beams of light and warmth, which are radiated from this glorious luminary, are ever the same. Their difference of color and intensity arises from the medium, through which they pass. As appreciated by the human mind, and embodied in human character, however, religion is unquestionably liable to be endlessly modified in its form, and diversified in its aspects. As an object of contemplation and in relation to the predominant feelings of the heart, it must always be regarded with veneration or hostility. It must either raise the mind to a level with its great and indispensable requirements, and subordinate all the powers of the soul to its sublime and hallowed influence, and thus become associated with emotions of delightful anticipation and tranquil repose ; or there must be a constant effort to reduce its claims within those limits, to lower its demands to that standard, which may be found not incompatible with the indulgence of prevailing habits, or the pursuit of other interests. Religion as enthroned in the light of divine revelation, and as wielding the sceptre of eternal righteousness and truth, presents an aspect too commanding, advances pleas too urgent, and unfolds events of too momentous a bearing upon human destiny to be regarded with utter unconcern. It is only, when she is masked by superstition, or clad in the fantastic habiliments of human ignorance and folly, that it is deemed safe to treat her as altogether unworthy of notice.

The moment she presents herself in her genuine and undisguised character, as claiming universal sovereignty over the conduct and the undivided dominion of the heart, there is either a cheerful acquiescence in her demands, a cordial recognition of her authority, and the subsequent enjoyment of that peace, which passeth all understanding; or there is a principle of violent and instinctive resistance called into action. The waters of indifference are at once troubled and excited from their unwholesome stagnancy, and they either admit the purifying element of truth to combine with the mass, and gradually to cleanse it from its dross, or there is a continued struggle maintained against a complete and salutary union. It is alleged that the avowed requisitions of religion are too close and rigid—that they are scarcely consistent with the necessary interests and pursuits of the present life, and altogether incompatible with the existing infirmities and imperfections of human nature. If the principles of real christianity, in such cases, are allowed at all to come in contact with the character, it is only in the form of a decent robe of external duties and observances.

To effect something like a reconciliation between principles, which will not combine—to obtain a measure of that peace of conscience, which in all its fullness and extent, religion alone can give, two grand methods have been devised—the one to make religion altogether to consist in outward forms and ceremonies, attended with a reputable discharge of the obligations of social morality; the other to decry all its external institu-

tions as needless, and to confine its supposed exercises and operations within the hidden sanctuary of the heart. The extent, to which either of these schemes has been carried, has greatly depended upon the spirit of the age, the course of political events, and the state of philosophy and literature. In a time of comparative ignorance, both secular and religious, when the whole intellectual hemisphere is involved in mist, and men are content to be the passive instruments of those who are willing to be the depositaries of their various principles and immunities, religion is usually identified with technical observances and sacramental rites. For a long series of years after Christianity was publicly recognized among the civilized nations of Europe, the spirit of piety, where it was not altogether extinct, appears to have almost universally deserted its appropriate residence in the inner man of the heart, and to have taken its lodgment among the wheels of a ponderous and complex mechanism. The natural consequence of such a transfer of vital energy and force, was to produce a complete derangement of function in the constitution of the Christian character, and to generate a combination of movements and attitudes, resembling rather the actions of a species of spiritual automaton, than of a rational and intelligent being, whose conduct was influenced by a principle of genuine and enlightened devotion. Under such circumstances the strength and validity of the religious principle were estimated by the regularity and amount of the attention, which was paid to outward ordinances,

and the grossest moral delinquencies were deemed capable of being more than adequately compensated by passing through a supernumerary ordeal of will-worship and voluntary humility. This was the reign of superstition—a reign of which it was one of the most authoritative and pregnant maxims, that “ignorance is the mother of piety.”

The era of the doctrine of Forms in religion, as well as in philosophy, seems now however, to a great extent to have passed away. The image of papal superstition, which had so long been sustained by entwining itself with the cords of civil despotism, has received an irrecoverable shock. The few grotesque and unmeaning observances, which are still retained as the necessary appendages of a sinking ecclesiastical system, have but little hold upon the judgment of those, among whom they are maintained; and there is reason to believe that the progress of knowledge and education, combined with the more effective influence of religion, will speedily break the few remaining links of this portentous enthrallment.

But there is a danger of an opposite character, a danger peculiarly incident to the times in which we live. It is that of the disparagement or total neglect of those ordinances of divine appointment, as if they were so many beggarly elements, unworthy of an age of reason and liberty—of philosophy and science. There is doubtless much of this spirit abroad in the world at the present moment. With the abandonment of the superstitious or unmeaning rites and observances of ecclesiastical imposition men have lost much of that deep-

felt veneration, with which it is necessary that divine institutions, and wholesome usages, though of human origin and arrangement should be regarded. Besides those, who neglect the appointed channels of divine grace, the sacramental and symbolic ordinances of piety, through mere recklessness and a desire to be free from their restraints, there is a large class of persons, of a more intellectual cast of character, who would reduce Christianity into a religion of mere sentiment. Professing to separate it from extraneous circumstances and adhesions, they would define it as a deep feeling of the heart, and they indulge in much illusive reverie, while they attempt to develop this vague abstraction. That philosophy however is spurious, which confines to one department of human nature, that which is required to extend over the whole. That science is empirical and unsound, which would destroy the body under pretence of obtaining, by that means, a clearer and more distinct view of the spirit. That religion is false, which professes to rise above ordinances, and would expect the end without using the means. That alone is true to the wisdom of God, and to the nature of man, which adapts itself to the various susceptibilities and requirements of the being, with whom it has to deal. Christianity is not a religion of formality, but in a proper sense, and within due limitations, it is unquestionably a religion of forms; and the period is yet unknown, when it was practically influential upon the character, while its rites and sacramental institutions were totally neglected. Independently of other considerations, it seems to

be paying the human heart a compliment, to which it is by no means entitled, to suppose it capable of maintaining the religious sentiment, in all its warmth and energy of action, without any aid from external and ceremonial excitement. It is true, indeed, that the law of the covenant must be inclosed within this sacred ark ; but this by no means supersedes the necessity of those symbols of the divine presence, and of those acts of ritual observance, which form essential and ostensible constituents of the sublime service of the sanctuary. They, who wilfully and obstinately neglect the ordinances of religion, therefore, to all purposes of devotional obedience neglect religion itself.

The instrumental agency, by which the operations of religion are carried on in the heart and character of man, is progressive—rising to higher degrees of simplicity, and independence of outward forms, as its principles are unfolded, and its nature is more clearly revealed. As the mind becomes more capable of appreciating spiritual and eternal things, it doubtless stands in less need of those means—those palpable forms and exhibitions, which in a low and imperfect state of character seem to embody them more distinctly to the eye, and to impress them more deeply upon the heart. With the progress of divine revelation, and the developement of the great plan of human salvation, the outward rites and symbols of religion have become still more simplified in their character, fewer in their number, and more sublimated in their import. The dispensation of the law was more remarkable for nothing, than the multiplicity

of its ceremonial institutions. That of the gospel, though it has superseded and abolished the great mass of the legal ordinances, is still a *Medial* economy; and it is only by a regular attendance upon its prescribed means, that its blessings and privileges can be secured.

To render the use of ordinances, however, really beneficial and effective, they must be invariably connected in the mind with their spiritual import and design, as well as the practical obligations, which they involve. They must be considered as the component parts of a system of government—of a plan of administration adapted to the constitution of our nature, and the various relations of our present existence. To exhibit them in this interesting connection, is uniformly attempted, though the author cannot but lament with imperfect success, in the following pages. According to this view, they are to be regarded not as so many modifications of mechanical operation, requiring only to be brought to bear upon human nature infallibly to work their own effects, but as so many helps to devotion—as so many ways of access into the divine presence, opened through that mystic veil, which shrouds from the eye of sense the glories of the Eternal Throne. They are pledges deposited with the universal church to encourage it, amidst the doubts and sorrows of mortality, to wait for that brighter economy, under which the glimmerings of an obscure and indistinct reflection will melt into the unclouded sunshine of direct and immediate vision.

ORDINANCES OF RELIGION.

PART FIRST.

THE ORDINANCE OF DIVINE WORSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

The Grounds and Obligations of Divine Worship.

To a being utterly ignorant of the history and economy of our world, there would doubtless be something strange and unaccountable in the phenomenon of so many persons meeting together from Sabbath to Sabbath—uttering so many articulate sounds—assuming so many attitudes and positions without any visible object, to which their attention appeared to be directed. They assemble, they alternately read and listen, they prostrate themselves upon their knees, and in some instances the emotions of sorrow and grief—of joy and delight are strongly depicted in their countenances. On surveying the length and breadth of our land

we find it interspersed with stately edifices as well as humbler structures set apart for the express purpose of affording men an opportunity to engage in these exercises of devotional intercourse with Heaven. Nor are these habits and provisions confined to any particular nation or country. Under some modification or other they are spread over the whole civilized world. The people has never yet existed, which had made any considerable progress in knowledge or virtue without exhibiting in connection with these attainments a variety of objects and observances declaratory of their homage and veneration as directed to some order of superior beings. Among most nations there are temples and altars, with which feelings of peculiar sacredness are associated, as hallowed by the immediate presence of Deity, and devoted by some act of solemn dedication to the service of religion. In addition to these external accommodations there is generally an order of men appointed for the specific object of conducting the services—of performing the more public and prominent functions, and of administering the rites of that particular form of worship, which may have been established by law or custom.⁽¹⁾ Wherever the knowledge of the true God has prevailed and the duty of loving, adoring, and serving Him duly appreciated and recognized there has also been a day observed, by His express injunction, on which all secular pursuits and occupations were to be laid aside, and those acts of devotional homage to be performed as well as those habits of thought and affection to be specially cultivated, by which he has declared it to be his will that he should be honored by his

reasonable and dependent creatures. It is in accordance with these views and in consequence of these considerations that professing Christians are accustomed, in the language of the inspired writer, from one Sabbath to another to go and worship before the Lord. Some of these are doubtless mainly influenced in this conduct by the prevailing habits of their age and country and neighbourhood. They have been willing to acknowledge that as a duty, which is recognized as such by the majority of those around them, without ever perhaps instituting a serious inquiry into its scriptural bearing and obligation. They have thus yielded themselves to the current of the best, and happily, in reference to this point, the predominant part of public opinion. Others there are among us, who are actuated by higher and more important considerations—who are swayed by a sincere and fervent desire to please God and to offer unto him the homage, to which he is so justly entitled at their hands—who have experienced the benefit of thus assembling themselves and have found by their own happy realization of the divine presence, that it is good to be there.

Considering however how many there are, who habitually neglect the public and therefore it may be confidently assumed the private worship of God, who upon various pretexts, most of them utterly futile and unavailing, have been accustomed for months and years to omit a regular attendance on the service of the sanctuary, I propose in the following Treatise to enter upon a somewhat extended illustration of the various branches of this important subject. At a time, in which pub-

lic institutions of every kind, both secular and sacred, are discussed and examined with so much freedom, and in many instances it is to be feared, with so much levity and profaneness, and in which men in general are so much readier to find an excuse for the neglect, than a motive for the performance of their duty, I trust that such a course of practical investigation of a subject, which stands intimately connected with our best and highest interests may not be altogether without its use. In the progress of this inquiry I shall be led to consider the Grounds and Obligations of Divine Worship—the peculiar Nature of the worship which Jehovah requires—the Component Parts of that worship—the Seasons, which have either been divinely appointed, or appear best calculated for its performance, and those Sacramental Institutions, which may justly be regarded as appendages of the general system. In the discussion of the seasons more peculiarly allotted for the worship of God, the design and universal obligation of the Sabbath—its appropriate duties, and the benefits calculated to result from its strict and conscientious observance will be considered at length. In the present chapter I shall confine myself to a brief view of the *Grounds* and *Obligations* of Divine Worship. I deem it important to lay down a firm basis for the whole inquiry in a clear exhibition of the objects, for which men are called upon to worship the Lord their God. This is necessary, because I am aware, there are persons in the world, who not only habitually neglect the services of the sanctuary, but even are disposed to deny that any real importance or obligation pertains to them. I have

conversed with individuals, who professed themselves unable to perceive any solid reason of duty or interest, why they should engage in the public exercises of the Sabbath—individuals, who seemed ready to exclaim with the daring scoffer—“Who is the Lord that we should obey him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?” It is with a view of diffusing more correct ideas upon this important and comprehensive subject, and of impressing upon the mind of the reader, a deeper sense of the paramount obligation by which he is bound sincerely to worship God in his closet, in his family, and in the sanctuary, that this discussion has been undertaken.

Among the grounds therefore, on which man is justly called to worship the Lord I would mention first—The relation of dependence, in which he stands to Jehovah as his sovereign Lord and Master. Worship in its original design is nothing else than the expression of that deep and fervent homage, which a creature owes to his Creator. This, therefore, is not a function peculiar to our condition as sinners, or to our rank as men. In some form or other it should run parallel with rational and accountable existence. It is discharged with profoundest reverence and deepest self-abasement in heaven, where the various orders of intellectual and angelic being vie with each other in the fervour of their love, the intensity of their devotion, and the unreserved cordiality of their recognition. The exercise of divine worship in some appropriate mode as an acknowledgement of the transcendent glory and unrivalled excellence of its object, is co-extensive with

the moral government of God. From the highest cherub or seraph in heaven, through the whole scale of intellectual and spiritual gradation to the meanest saint upon earth, the worship of the Eternal and the Infinite is a sacred and bounden duty as well as a delightful and characteristic employ. This is a token of submission to the authority of the Supreme—a badge of cheerful and honourable subjection to the government of the Highest—an act of loyalty and attachment to the throne of the immortal and invisible King, which pertains to the very nature and condition of every intelligent and dependent being throughout the universe. It is that by which Jehovah himself hath appointed that his creatures should testify their allegiance unto him—that they should acknowledge him as their Greater—that they should do him homage as the Author of their being, and the Giver of their blessings :—as their Protector, their Guardian, and their Friend, as the great first Pattern and Exemplar of all perfection. The worship of the Deity is the natural and universal language, in which those feelings of gratitude, veneration and affection engendered by the contemplation of his character and attributes find appropriate utterance. To man as originally occupying perhaps the lowest place in the order of rational existence, as having his foundation in the dust and as crushed before the moth ; to man especially as a fallen and guilty, but at the same time a redeemed and favored creature, this mode of acknowledging his own unworthiness, of testifying his admiration of the power and wisdom, of the grace and goodness of Jehovah is a matter of most obvious and paramount obligation.

He therefore, who wilfully neglects or perversely refuses to come and worship before the Lord in that house of prayer where He has promised to meet his people, to receive their homage and to communicate unto them the tokens of His favor and love, is in reality guilty of direct rebellion against Him, in whom he lives and moves and has his being. He virtually abjures his allegiance to the sceptre of the universal King. To all ostensible and practical purposes he denies his dependence upon, and his obligations unto, the God of the whole earth. He will not acknowledge by a public and open avowal, that it is by the permission and the sustaining energy of that gracious Being he lives and breathes, that it is by His power he is protected, that by His bounty he is supported, and by his patience and forbearance he is spared from day to day amidst so much of disobedience and rebellion. He declares on the contrary in the constructive language of conduct that he has no feeling of homage and adoration in common with the angels above or the saints below, that he is independent of all higher authority and control, that he wants no favor, and that he owes no thanks beyond the range of the frail and helpless beings of his own nature; and that therefore his presence shall grace no assembly of suppliants, and that his voice shall mingle none of its notes with that universal chorus of gratitude and praise, which ascends from earth to heaven, resounds through the vast empyrean and circumscribes the bounds of creation.

Let us reflect therefore upon the heinous guilt, the black ingratitude which marks conduct of this

description towards the great and universal Sovereign. Let us consider the stubborn pride, the hardened impiety, which it involves, or at least the reckless levity, which it incontrovertibly proves and cherishes. I am perfectly aware and know full well the meaning of the futile plea sometimes advanced by persons of this character, that they can worship God with equal benefit and acceptance at home, or in the fields, or perhaps amid scenes of a far more objectionable description : or, as they sometimes pretend, within the sanctuary of their own hearts.⁽²⁾ I can appreciate the absurd objection that those, who are accustomed to frequent the house of God and come to worship before him are in no respect better than those who stay away. I can also perceive the bearing of what is occasionally advanced as a ground of absence, that it is better to abstain from taking any part in the services of the sanctuary than to combine this habit of attendance with general inconsistency and impropriety in other parts of the conduct. All these pleas are but vague and inadequate excuses for the neglect of a great and universal duty. They are but a thin veil thrown over the real indisposition of the heart, over the innate enmity of the carnal mind towards God. Nothing can justify the habitual abandonment of this first duty of a creature, but absolute and unavoidable necessity.

This will appear yet more evident, if we consider farther, the Tendency of a sincere and regular attendance upon the worship of God, and the services of the sanctuary to cherish a feeling of devout reverence for Him, who is the object of ado-

ration. It was doubtless for the purpose of engendering and cultivating this habit of the mind and of thus contributing to the production of all those fruits of holiness and obedience, which naturally spring from it, that the system of divine worship was originally instituted. Although the particular mode of expressing the homage due to a supreme Being may, to a certain extent, be a matter of expediency, and be regulated by circumstances, yet the original ground, the primary obligation of divine worship lies deep in the nature of man as capable of being correctly influenced and affected towards his Creator. The design of Jehovah in requiring men to meet together at stated seasons for the purpose of unitedly engaging in his worship,⁽³⁾ was not that they should go through a few vague and idle ceremonies, that they should assume so many attitudes, or perform so many evolutions—that they should utter so much devotional phraseology, and listen to so much of doctrinal or practical instruction ; but the object was that their understanding might be enlightened, that their affections might be warmed and elevated—that the attributes of God—the wretchedness and guilt of man—the felicities of heaven, and the miseries of hell—the stupendous wonders of redeeming love—the compassion of the Father—the grace of the Son, and the amazing condescension of the Spirit, in relation to the several parts of the economy of human salvation : it was that all these overwhelming and heart-stirring facts and considerations should be brought to bear upon the mind of the worshipper. And experience is altogether in favour of this plan as being efficacious above all

others, when accompanied with the divine blessing, in bringing men to a saving acquaintance with God, and in maintaining, through the subsequent stages of their journey, the power and influence of the truth upon their minds. This therefore is one of the great moral grounds, in connection with the glory of God and the celebration of his various attributes, upon which the whole economy of divine worship is founded. The whole of its exercises, whether intellectual, or more strictly devotional, when conducted with wisdom and energy, with sobriety and zeal, like that inestimable volume, by which they are inculcated, are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness. And he, who would enjoy these benefits must from one Sabbath to another come to worship before the Lord.

But independently of these fundamental and primary grounds the duty of divine worship is farther established and enforced by positive institution and express Command. If therefore on previous general principles, we had known nothing of the obligations incumbent upon us in reference to this point, still the command of God, being so explicit and unequivocal, would have set the question completely at rest. Besides innumerable injunctions, some of them most peremptory and decisive, not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, we have the whole history of the Church of God as recorded in holy writ, bearing its testimony to the observance of this institution in every age of the world. We have the venerable sages of the patriarchal dispensation rising in hoary majesty to

our view and marking the successive stages of their pilgrimage with altars erected unto the Lord, around which their families and dependents met together for the purpose of partaking of the devotional or sacrificial rite. We have the Princes, the Prophets and the Priests of the Mosaic dispensation, surrounded with the whole company of the faithful, maintaining the worship of the temple in all its sacred magnificence, and deeming it their chiefest joy to mingle with its crowd of suppliants and to swell the tide of its symphonies. We have the example of the Saviour himself and his disciples, at the dawn of the evangelical dispensation, attending the service of the synagogue from one Sabbath to another and endeavouring to raise the will-worship of Pharisaic formality and hypocrisy into wholesome scriptural instruction and pure devotional adoration. As the principles of the Gospel began to be more fully developed in the establishment of churches through the labours of the evangelists and apostles we find the same practice observed and enforced by more urgent injunctions. And thus upon every ground of reason and authority, of duty and expediency, of moral fitness and positive enactment are we bound at all practicable and suitable seasons to engage in the worship of God. He therefore, who wilfully neglects it, stands condemned of a most palpable and direct violation of one of the first and most imperative duties, which a creature owes to his Creator; a duty infinitely enhanced in its obligations by those engaging considerations, which spring out of the covenant of grace.

But the duty of Divine Worship is not only ab-

solute and imperative, as founded in the nature and relative condition of man and as explicitly enjoined by God, but it is also Universal in its obligation and extent. In one of the predictive announcements of the prophet Isaiah all flesh is represented as coming from Sabbath to Sabbath to worship before the Lord. And this is in perfect accordance with what has already been declared to have been the practice of the servants of God in every age. It is a duty universal in its bearing, as it has been obligatory under every dispensation, under which true religion has existed and been administered in the world. There have been those who held that outward forms of worship were confined to the Mosaic economy, and that under the Gospel all external manifestations of homage through the medium of ritual and ceremonial observances have been superceded and absorbed in the profounder simplicity and the sublimer spirituality of its character. This notion is founded upon a totally false view of human nature and of the great principles of the divine administration. It is true indeed that the gospel is pre-eminently a dispensation of the spirit, and that in accordance with its principles no service can be acceptable unto God, which is not characterised by a fervent exercise of the affections, warmed and animated by divine grace. But it is no part of the plan, nor is it agreeable to the genius of the gospel that all external tokens of homage and veneration should be abrogated—that there should be no public recognition of the majesty and authority, of the grace and goodness of Jehovah—that the lips should be closed from shewing forth his praise,

that the fountains of penitential sorrow should be sealed, and that the glowing energies of the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart, should be smothered in mute admiration. So far is this from being the case, that the gospel enforces as a solemn duty, and elevates into an exalted privilege the practice of assembling together for the various purposes of edification and instruction—of adoration, prayer and praise. And it is while engaged in these sacred exercises and occupations that God has in an especial manner promised to meet His people, and to bless them with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Throughout the whole range of those dispensations, under which it hath pleased Him that religion should exert its controlling and purifying influences in the world, an external system of worship has been invariably instituted and maintained. Under no plea of spirituality or Christian simplicity therefore—on no pretext of the liberty of the Gospel, and of its superiority to the beggarly elements, which characterized a mechanical and superficial routine of service—on no ground of self-sufficiency or imaginary elevation in the scale of Christian knowledge, or attainment is any man justified in neglecting those ordinances, which form the medium of communication between heaven and earth, and, as a mystic cloud, accompany the Church of God, for the purpose of communicating the responses of his will, and of reflecting the manifestations of his glory, throughout every stage of its terrestrial pilgrimage.

The universality of this duty may be considered farther as it is obligatory upon persons of all ranks and conditions in life, persons of all circum-

his hand and dependents upon his bounty—as those, who have been spared by his mercy, and have been redeemed by the blood of his Son, it must also be borne in mind, that it is not a formal and lifeless discharge of this imperative obligation, that will satisfy the demands of Heaven, or secure the great objects of the institution. In order to realize the benefits it was intended to convey, every part of the service must be spiritualized. The sanctuary, which we frequent, must not be unto us a worldly sanctuary, the service, which we perform, must not be a mere bodily service—the ordinances, of which we partake, must not be carnal ordinances, and the prayers, which we offer up, must not be vain repetitions, The seal of the Spirit on the contrary must be applied to every record of our proceedings, and the hue of heaven must be spread over the whole complexion of our conduct. It is thus that our bodies will become, in the highest sense of the expression, temples of the Holy Ghost—that our hearts will become pure altars burning with the love of Christ—that our tongues will become tongues of fire, proclaiming in glowing accents the wonders of redeeming grace, and that our path will be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

CHAPTER II.

The Essential Requisites of Acceptable Worship.

THERE is an essential difference between a moral and a mechanical process of operation. The former is peculiar to rational and accountable beings; it is that alone which can be required as a duty, which can be a subject of legitimate approbation or censure, or be visited with reward or punishment. Acts indeed, which ought to bear a moral impress as performed by beings endued with reason and understanding, may be out of the range of that character through the absence of all deliberate exercise of thought and feeling. The work may be done through the mere exertion of physical power directed by custom or habit, and thus be deprived of all the value and importance which would have belonged to it, if executed under the impulse of sound apprehensions and correct motives. If it be undertaken with false views and for wrong purposes, it wholly changes its nature; and that which in its external bearing and aspect would seem to be characterized by a high order of piety or virtue, will be found, if closely investigated, to involve no inconsiderable share of impiety and turpitude.

In no acts or exercises of mankind is there a greater liability to fail in duty through the want of an accurate view of its nature and requisitions than in those, which are immediately connected with the service of God. No part of our conduct is more entirely dependent for its value and efficiency upon the principles from which it emanates, and upon the objects, to which it is directed, than this. Hence it is of absolute necessity that, in whatever act of worship or service we may engage, we should have a clear and definite knowledge of what Jehovah requires at our hands. Through the want of this we may altogether miss our aim; we may misapprehend the design of the whole scheme; we may come short of the requirement at every point; we may go astray from the authorized line of movement at every step in our progress; and thus the external discharge of duty, though of paramount weight and obligation, will become unto us an occasion of guilt and condemnation. It is not enough therefore that man should simply know that he is bound by every principle of nature and grace—of reason and religion to worship and serve his Maker: it is not sufficient that he should be thoroughly convinced of the obligations by which a creature stands pledged to his Creator. This under some modification or other appears to be a natural instinct of the human mind. In addition to this general impression and to a disposition to acquiesce in its demands there must be a clear and unequivocal apprehension of the nature and character of that worship, which God will graciously accept: there must be a knowledge of those indispensable requisites, without which no service

can be pleasing unto Him, or be profitable to ourselves. Having, therefore, attempted in the preceding chapter to establish the grounds and obligations of divine worship, I shall now proceed to point out a few of those essential qualities, without which it can be no other than an empty form or bodily service.

I would remark in the first place, that appropriate and acceptable worship requires, so far as is compatible with our present circumstances and endowments a Correct Knowledge of Him, who is the object of it. "Ye worship ye know not what," was the declaration of Christ addressed to the woman of Samaria; and it is to be feared that there are too many professing Christians, against whom a similar charge might with truth be advanced. They have never perhaps attempted to form any clear and distinct notion of the Being, whom they meet to adore, or if they have ever conceived any definite idea of Him, it is utterly at variance with those sublime perfections which essentially belong to his nature, and subversive of those attributes which to us constitute all that can be known of Him. Vividly to realize in thought a Being, who gives no sensible indication of his existence except through the medium of his works—who affords no external tokens of his presence, which can be recognised by the organs of perception, is doubtless one of the greatest efforts of the human mind.⁽⁴⁾ In general there is a vagueness or gross materialism attending our views of the great and glorious Object of our worship, which is little if at all removed from utter ignorance. Hence under every form of Heathenism from the refined

polytheism of Greece and Rome, to the most grovelling superstition of savage life, and even under every dispensation of true religion preceding the Christian, there was something presented to the senses as a representative of the Deity, or as a manifestation of the cognizance he took of the homage of his worshippers. Under the gospel every such aid is removed, every such appeal to the sentient part of our nature is withheld. We are thrown upon the bare testimony of scripture, carried home to our mind and conscience by the internal workings of the Spirit and supported by the clearest deductions of our reason. We are left to the realizing power of that faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. We have no voice from heaven sounding forth in our ears and announcing in terms of irresistible conviction the name and character of Him, whom we profess to serve. We have no symbol of the divine majesty resting over our tabernacle—no vision of glory embodied in perceptible shape over our altar and shining forth as a cloud of light from between the cherubim. Of all these outward means of acquaintance and intercourse with God we are destitute. But we have been blessed with privileges and advantages of a far higher order. We have the more sure word of prophecy as centering in the person and as verified in the actual incarnation, life and death of the promised Saviour of the world. We have the volume of eternal truth, which is throughout a record of the character and perfections—of the will and attributes of Him with whom we have to do. We have the promise of the Spirit as the peculiar and distinguishing characteristic of the

evangelical economy, and as pledged, in answer to our prayers, to lead us into all truth.

It is by a due regard to these varied means of information that we are to obtain a correct and adequate, though necessarily imperfect knowledge of Him, whom we are bound to worship. From these we must learn in the first instance that He is a Spirit. We must be taught that the Being whom from one sabbath to another we meet to worship, is not such an one as ourselves, partly composed of flesh and blood. We must learn to raise and purify our conceptions to the simple spirituality of his essence. We must habituate ourselves to contemplate Him, as the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity—as a Being who is confined by no limits of time, and circumscribed by no boundaries of space, but embraces both within the absolute infinity of his existence. We must accustom ourselves to regard Him as not only extending his knowledge over the whole range of creation, but as One, who is present in our assemblies, with a minuteness and accuracy, with a vigilance and closeness of observation surpassing the combined, the concentrated attention of the universality of created minds.

Without such a knowledge of God as a Being of spiritual essence, it is impossible that we should render unto Him such worship as may be suitable to his nature or acceptable in his sight. Our blessed Saviour himself indeed distinctly declared that the fact of the great Jehovah's being a Spirit rendered it absolutely necessary that they who worship him should perform that exalted service in spirit and in truth—both requisitions obviously implying that He

should be truly and correctly known. But to make our worship a suitable expression of the homage we owe unto Him, we must not only know Him in his essential nature as a Spirit and therefore as incapable of being suitably represented or conceived under any physical or material form, but we must also know Him in reference to the various perfections both natural and moral, as they have been usually distinguished, which belong to his character, and form the foundation of the whole system of his worship. We must know Him as a God of infinite power in order to be impressed with those sensations of holy fear and awe, without which we cannot come and worship before Him with feelings of becoming reverence ; as a God of inexhaustible knowledge and boundless wisdom, without which we cannot apply with confidence for his guidance and direction ; as a God of unrivalled goodness, faithfulness and love, without which our worship would be the extorted homage of terror and hate, instead of the spontaneous offering of the heart and affections. We must not only know Him in his revealed character as the God of nature and providence, but also as he is presented in the bright mirror of evangelical truth, as the gracious Contriver of the beneficent plan of our salvation and as willing, in virtue of that scheme, to reconcile the world unto himself through the death and righteousness of his Son. His glory as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, must pass before us in all its transcendent lustre, while we shelter ourselves within the clefts of that rock without the intervention of which we should be unable to sustain the

blast of his indignation, or the concentrated blaze of his perfections. We must contemplate those perfections as they meet in combined and augmented brightness in the person of Jesus Christ; as they are reflected in warm and vivid radiance from his Cross. We must thus know God, not as some vague and magnificent abstraction of physical energy, and of moral beauty and loveliness dwelling amid scenes of undefinable grandeur beyond the clouds; but we must view him as the God in whose immediate presence we stand, and his attributes in their direct bearing upon our own welfare and destiny. Every conception of the imagination, in its endeavour to realize his presence, every conviction of the judgment, every feeling of the heart must be founded upon a clear view of what He is in Himself and of what He has become unto us. That worship only can command his approbation, which springs, not from blind and unreflecting ignorance, but from an intelligent and enlightened survey of his real claim upon our homage.

In conjunction with a correct knowledge of God as he has revealed Himself in his word, and as he stands related to his people in virtue of the covenant of redemption, our worship in order to be acceptable must be characterized by a deep *Sincerity* of purpose. There is no kind of professed obedience to a divine injunction, which is more utterly destitute of value, more widely removed from the reality; there is no species of hypocrisy, for which Jehovah has expressed his abhorrence in stronger and more unequivocal terms than that of an external round of devotional services in which the heart

bears no share. While we maintain the unquestionable and universal obligation of a public and systematic order of worship, as enforced by the command of God and as urged by every consideration of duty and utility, let it not for a moment be imagined that a mere process of bodily exercise is all that we mean. Let it not be supposed that while in their proper order we hold the expediency and necessity of outward forms, we require nothing more. Let it not be thought that because we press upon men the importance of a regular attendance on the services of the sanctuary, and of uniting in the hallowed exercises of congregational worship, we look for nothing beyond the mechanical observance. So far is this from being the case that the outward act is required for no other reason than because it is intended to represent, and is calculated to cherish, a deep and unfeigned homage of the heart. The external structure and decoration of the temple are important, only as forming the decent and suitable enclosure of that sacred flame, which is intended to burn upon the altar within. The association of so many persons in the same holy occupations is designed only to exhibit and promote that union of minds, that amalgamation of heart and affection which by mutual radiations of devout and fervent sympathy may kindle those emotions of gratitude and joy and love, that will ascend as a cloud of grateful incense to the throne above. The prostration of the body is acceptable on no other account than as it is symbolical of a profound humiliation of the soul. The phraseology of prayer, in its varied forms of adoration, confession, supplication, thanksgiving and praise, as uttered

by the lips; is significant only as it is expressive of the genuine sentiments, which it professes and is intended to convey. The whole body, in short, of the outward forms and ceremonies and observances of religion, can be of no other service and is designed to answer no other purpose in the economy of divine worship than to be a shrine for the inhabitation of that living spirit of piety, sincerity and truth, in which its real essence consists. It is nothing else than a system of appropriate organs, adapted to our present character and condition, through the medium of which the principle of immortality communicated from the Fountain of eternal life above may discharge its varied functions.

This being the case we cannot be surprized that Jehovah should so frequently express not only the utter futility, but even the deep abomination of a formal and hypocritical act of worship in his sight. Such a process is not only worthless and unavailing for its proper end, but it is absolutely odious in his eyes; and it is by so much the more unworthy and affronting to his Majesty as it assumes the character and attitude of a more direct and reverential homage than any other mode of serving or acknowledging Him. That men should draw nigh unto Him with their lips, while their hearts are far from Him, that they should adopt the language of contrition, veneration and thanksgiving, while their carnal mind, in the mean time, is full of enmity against Him; that they should bend their knees before Him, while their hearts rise in rebellion and proud contempt against his character and government, He repeatedly declares to be in the

highest degree offensive to his mind. The sacrifice of the wicked, as offered with insincerity of purpose, He peremptorily asserts to be abomination unto Him, and in language of indignant expostulation with such persons, and of rejection of such services, He exclaims to his professing people of old, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with: it is iniquity even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul abhorreth: they are a trouble to me: I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea when ye make many prayers I will not hear."

To meet the demands and to rise to the conditions of acceptable worship, it is not enough that the character of the individual should be free from gross depravity and vice: it is not sufficient that in his approaches to God he should not be actuated by any sinister or selfish motive. It is enough to mar the service in which he is engaged, and to render it utterly unfit for acceptance at the throne of grace, that it should be wanting in that sincerity, and simplicity of purpose, without which no act of professed homage can be pleasing unto God. There are many persons who from one sabbath to another go up into the house of the Lord in mere compliance with custom, combined, perhaps, with some vague and indefinite impression that it is right so to do. But they have no specific object in view. They do not feel that they have there an impor-

tant business to transact, that they have immediately and most solemnly to do with God. That they are about to enter into his presence chamber, and that interests of everlasting importance are involved in the efficacy and acceptance of their supplications. Amidst this vagueness of design and desultoriness of feeling, it is a matter of no surprise that the privilege of waiting upon God in the duties of his worship is attended in their case with no apparent benefit—that as they expect nothing, and desire nothing, they naturally receive nothing—that successive sabbaths pass over their heads, marked perhaps by a regular attendance upon the means of grace, whilst their character still manifests the same apathy and indifference to the overwhelming realities of an eternal world. To obviate this evil, and to render our worship truly acceptable unto God, we must go up unto his house with our eye more singly and uniformly directed to his glory ; we must prepare ourselves for this holy service by fervent prayer and devout meditation. We must consider ourselves as those who are to be admitted to an audience of the King of kings, as those, who are to see, in the vivid realization of faith, the Lord of Hosts ; and therefore ought not only to banish all malice and hypocrisy, all pride and carnality from their minds, but also to concentrate all the energies of their thoughts and affections in the sublime occupation, on which they are about to enter. Worship offered with this simplicity of aim, with this sincerity of intention, by whatever imperfection it may in other respects be characterized, cannot fail to be acceptable to Him, to whom it is presented.

But to raise our worship to that tone of elevation, by which it ought to be characterized, to impregnate it with the seed of life and immortality, and to impart unto it that celestial unction, which will cause the face of every adoring and listening suppliant to shine as if it had been the face of an angel; this deep sincerity of purpose must be combined with fervent *Spirituality* of Affection. The worship of God, it should ever be borne in mind was instituted for the express purpose of affording us an opportunity of coming into closer and more immediate contact with Himself. The very circumstance that God is a Spirit is adduced by our blessed Saviour, as the ground of an imperative requisition, that they, who worship him should worship him in spirit as well as in truth. There must be an analogy—a congruity between the homage, which is offered, and the essential character of Him, to whom it is rendered; without which it must be utterly unprofitable and offensive. It is not enough therefore that our worship should be exempt from any gross deviation from sincerity and truth. To be acceptable unto God it must rise far above the negative merit, if we may use such a term, of freedom from formality, insipidity and hypocrisy. It must bear upon every part of it the impress of deep and fervent devotion. Our offering must not be a cold and lifeless mass of rites and ceremonies—of words and attitudes—of matter and form; but there must be a glow of intense and holy feeling transfused through every element, of which it is composed. It must be heaven's own fire drawn down by the attractive power and influence of prayer, to kindle the liv-

ing sacrifice of our unreserved self-surrender, and returning again in a pure flame of genuine and ardent devotion. The very materialism of our worship must be spiritualized. The very language which we employ must be expressive of higher thoughts, and more sacred feelings than it would convey in its conventional import as applied to earthly things. While we are engaged in this sublime intercourse with God, our heart must burn within us. The beauty of holiness, like a robe of celestial purity and loveliness, must be spread over the whole range of our services. The graces of the Spirit in all their intensity and ardour—in all their glow of holy tenderness—in all their energy of combined and blended affection must pervade our souls and impart a cast of spirituality to all our words and actions—a reflection of that image, which we now see only through the glass of ordinances, but shall hereafter see face to face, and be ourselves transformed into the same from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

We remark, as another essential characteristic of divine worship—that it must be offered with a *Solemnity* of deportment, attended with a decency and congruity in the external Forms, in which it is visibly embodied. It is possible, indeed, that these requisites may be possessed and exhibited in the utter absence of the spirit, by which they were designed to be animated. We may go through the exterior mechanism, we may perform the bodily exercise of worship, with the utmost regularity and propriety of demeanour, while in the mean time every element of sincere homage and genuine devotion is a stranger to our bosom. We may pre-

sent ourselves at the appointed hour within the courts of the Lord's house, and be exceeded by none in the decorum and apparent seriousness of our conduct, but we may have neither the knowledge, nor the sincerity, nor the spirituality of thought and feeling, which characterize the true worshippers of the Father.

While, however, gravity, steadiness and sobriety of outward deportment may exist in the total destitution of real seriousness of mind, and true contrition of Spirit, it must at the same time be held as an unquestionable maxim, that without the former habits of conduct, the latter endowments of character cannot exist. Nothing can be more inconsistent with that beauty of holiness—with that moral elegance, if I may so express it, which forms the drapery of public worship, than a habit of levity, irreverence, or marked indifference, during the period of professed attendance upon God, in the duties of his immediate service. There is a solemnity attaching to eternal things—there is an awfulness in the acknowledged presence of the Most High—there is a terror in the glance of omniscience—there is a dignity in prayer and communion with God—there is a majesty clothing every sentence, which is suitably uttered—every act, which is appropriately performed in the worship of the Eternal, with which the veriest thoughtlessness of childhood or youth, the veriest wantonness of impiety or the veriest hardihood of settled and inveterate profaneness alone will dare to trifle. The eye that wanders in levity or stares in idle vacancy, the muscles that yawn in listlessness or relax into an expression of unseasonable and

unseemly mirth, the lips that give utterance to trifling and untimely communications in the midst of converse with God and fellowship with Angels—these are exhibitions of inconsiderateness, vanity or recklessness, which ought never to present themselves within the precincts of God's house. To persons, who may be guilty of any of these habits, well indeed may we address the expostulation of the wise man, "Keep thy foot, when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools : for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God."

In order to secure these habits of solemnity, sobriety and reverential awe of the divine Majesty, it is important that every thing in the outward ceremonial of our worship should be distinguished by propriety, utility and obvious aptitude to the object, for which it is designed. And on this not unimportant branch of our subject I rejoice to think that our own Church has evinced singular wisdom and discernment, forming its system of worship on a plan equally remote from the pomp and pride, the multitudinous forms and the gorgeous decorations of the Romish ritual, and that unimpressive simplicity, occasionally bordering upon baldness and insipidity, which must considerably impair its efficiency as a means of affecting the mind of man. That every thing in the machinery of divine worship should be performed decently and in order, is as much an apostolical injunction, a command of God as it is that we should not neglect the assembling of ourselves together. It is not less a matter of

obvious wisdom and expediency that we should worship God through the medium of suitable and appropriate forms than it is a matter of absolute and imperative duty that we should worship Him in spirit and in truth. We may safely assert therefore that as a mere round of ceremonial observances however impressive, the bare reiteration of devotional formularies, however significant in their import and however exalted in the tone of piety, which they express, are of themselves utterly inefficient; so the total exclusion of all external aids, of all forms and systems in the present state of our nature, renders a due and profitable performance of the worship of Jehovah little short of impossible. While heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him who is the object of our adoration, He hath ordained that his people here below should seek him in temples made with hands, and hath promised that by a devout and diligent attendance upon the means, which are there administered, they shall ascend as by a mystic ladder to the footstool of his eternal throne.

Such appear to be the essential and indispensable requisites to an acceptable worship of God; There must be, within unavoidable limitations, a correct knowledge of Him, who is the object of worship; there must be a genuine sincerity of purpose; there must be a profound spirituality of affection, and finally there must be a solemnity of deportment attended with a decency and congruity in the outward forms of worship. Without these qualifications no act of worship can be really acceptable to God or profitable to ourselves. We must learn therefore to cultivate and pursue these

habits. We must seek a more accurate and comprehensive knowledge of God, especially in those relations, in which he stands to his people as their God in covenant. We must examine ourselves with closer scrutiny with respect to the prevailing motives, by which we are actuated, while we draw nigh unto God in the several duties of his worship. We must endeavour habitually to live in closer communion, in more intimate fellowship with God. And lastly, we must exercise greater vigilance over ourselves, while we are assembled in his house, and thus the words of our mouth, and the meditations of our heart, will ever be acceptable unto Him, who is our Strength and our Redeemer.

CHAPTER III.

The Component Parts of Divine Worship.

THROUGHOUT the whole range of the divine government there is observable a twofold subserviency of influence and operation, the one having a more immediate bearing upon the maintenance of the authority and the manifestation of the glory of the supreme Ruler Himself, the other having a more direct and exclusive reference to the welfare and happiness of his creatures. Both these objects, indeed, in their ultimate results, are inseparably united and combined. They run parallel with each other throughout the whole history of the universe. They took their rise together in the fountain of all being at the beginning of the creation of God. They were mutually blended by his plastic hand in the very constitution of the physical and moral world. And as they are respectively developed in the course of nature and in the administration of the gracious economy of human redemption, they gradually enlarge and swell that tide of beneficence, which will issue in the eternal blessedness of all who are willing to yield themselves to its direction.

In that department of duty, which we are now engaged in considering, this combination of bear-

ing is very prominently displayed. It is unquestionable that the institution of divine worship was intended and is most eminently calculated to sustain the honor of the divine Majesty, and to bring into impressive exhibition those attributes which constitute the glory of the divine character on the one hand, and to promote the best interests of man on the other. Nowhere indeed do these all important ends meet in more perfect harmony and coalesce into a more friendly and effective alliance than within the precincts of the sanctuary. Under the Mosaic economy the temple at Jerusalem was the great resting place of the glory of Jehovah, and the scene of the purest and most exalted enjoyments of his servants. Within that sacred and magnificent structure they were privileged to meet Him in the special manifestations of Himself, and so conscious were they of the advantages accruing to themselves from this sublime intercourse and so sensible of the inexpressible pleasure with which it was attended, that whenever they were deprived of the opportunity of realizing it, they bewailed it as one of the heaviest calamities. To the various exercises of the Temple therefore they were attached by one of the strongest links of their heart's affections. So closely associated with Jerusalem, in their estimation, was all suitable and availing worship, that, even in the land of their captivity, when they set themselves to seek the Lord, they directed their faces towards the temple, where He had been accustomed to reveal Himself to their souls; and their recollections lingered with fond and melancholy satisfaction around the courts, where the very atmosphere was redolent of heaven and every stone appeared to be

marked with the footprints of the Eternal. This feeling of intense, we might almost say enthusiastic attachment to the scene of the brightest display of Jehovah's presence was doubtless founded upon a sense of the benefits, which had been there received, and a conviction that through the medium of no other institution than that which was there celebrated could so vivid and consolatory a perception of his excellency have been obtained. In the exercise of divine worship, in fact, there is a transfer of resources, there is salutary circulation carrying on between heaven and earth. The very tears of repentance which are there shed, the very breath of thanksgiving and praise, which is there exhaled, when they have been carried upward on the wings of faith and love, form a bow of the covenant in the skies, reflecting the varied beauties of the divine perfections, and bespeaking peace upon earth, and good will towards men; and they descend again in showers of blessing to enrich and refresh the soul. And if objects of such momentous importance as the honor of God and the spiritual and eternal good of man are so closely connected with a due discharge of the duty of divine worship, it assuredly exhibits in a still stronger light the supreme value of the institution and the paramount necessity of maintaining it.

In the two former chapters we endeavoured to prove and to illustrate the grounds and obligations of this duty, and pointed out the indispensable requisites to its availing performance. We shall now proceed therefore to a brief consideration of the *Component Parts* of this sacred service in the twofold relation already specified—first as it has re-

ference to the glory and authority of God, and then as it stands more immediately connected with the necessities and the future destinies of man. In the worship of God it is evident, from the very phraseology, in which it is expressed ; that we are not to have exclusive regard to our own welfare. It was obviously intended to be something in the form of a return unto God for all that he has done and provided for our good.

For the purpose of realizing this object, the first thing which appears to be necessary, and therefore the first component part of divine worship is, *Adoration* of the divine perfections. This is doubtless the first duty which a rational, dependent and happy creature owes to a wise, powerful and beneficent Creator.⁽⁵⁾ We may justly conceive it therefore to have been the form, which the worship of Jehovah primarily assumed. It was the celebration of his lofty character and attributes, which re-echoed throughout the vast concave of heaven, when at the dawn of creation the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. It was the celebration of his transcendent excellencies, in strains of devout and rapturous admiration, which first broke upon that silence, wherein Jehovah had hitherto wrapped himself amidst the deep solitude of his own being. It was the delight of those pure and exalted intelligences, with whom his creative energy had surrounded his throne—to acknowledge the perfections, to the exercise of which they were indebted for all that they were, and which shone forth with such conspicuous lustre throughout every region of the universe. They were eager to give vent to all that

they knew and could proclaim of his power, wisdom and love. The strains, which thus primarily issued from heaven, and trembled in delightful harmony to the harps of Angels, were speedily caught by the inhabitants of earth, and our first parents in their original condition, before they had yet occasion to appeal for pardon and peace, were doubtless ready to mingle their voices with the anthem of angelic adoration.

During the earlier dispensations of religion we find that the several forms of worship intended for the use of individuals, or the church generally, abounded with adoring acknowledgments of the Majesty and benignity of the great Sovereign of the world. We find the whole system of nature brought into requisition for the purpose of celebrating his perfections. The sun, the moon, and the stars—the air, the earth and the seas—the mountains, the trees and the rivers—every thing, in short, which is splendid or magnificent—which is awful or sublime—which is beautiful or picturesque—which is useful or salutary within the whole range of the material universe, is called upon, in its appropriate order, to do homage unto Him. They are urged, in the language of devout and animated metaphor, to perform their respective functions in harmonious and combined adoration of Him, who gave their being, and endued them with all their powers. It is in compliance with these appeals, and to carry their designs into effect, that we are required to meet together for his worship. It is to cherish in our hearts and to proclaim with our lips those sentiments of adoring awe, and of reverential affection, which Jehovah in

his incomprehensible essence as the immortal, invisible and only wise God, and in his gracious and beneficent relations to us as our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier so justly claims at our hands, and which it is not less our privilege than our duty to yield. It is to prostrate ourselves before his throne, and to acknowledge Him as the greatest and the best of Beings. It is to extol Him, whom we cannot fully know, but who, in proportion as we are enabled to know Him, appears still more worthy of our admiration. It is to be lost in adoring wonder of that love, which human thought is too confined to grasp, and human language too feeble to express. It is to direct our contemplation to the cross in union with the enlightened and sanctified spirits of heaven and earth, and to behold that spectacle of blended glories—of majesty and benignity—of wisdom and power—of justice and mercy—of wrath and love—which there blazes with overpowering radiance upon the view, and throws the lustre of the divine perfections over the whole compass of creation, and around the whole circle of eternity. It is for the purpose of thus enlarging and elevating our conceptions of the character and attributes of the God, whose we are and whom we are bound to serve, that we are directed to meet together, and to utter such thoughts as we can conceive—such feelings as we can exercise in such words as we can command in the order of his appointed worship.

Another branch of divine worship immediately connected with the preceding, and having a more direct reference to God himself is the exercise of *Thanksgiving* for his past mercies, and for the va-

rious blessings which he has promised for us in the covenant of redemption. If it be our duty, as it unquestionably is, to adore with prostrate and reverential awe the boundless attributes of Jehovah, we are doubtless placed under equal obligations to bless and praise Him that those attributes have been so uniformly exerted for our benefit. A grateful acknowledgment of kindness from whomsoever received, is a spontaneous dictate of nature, and one of the first requirements of moral government. Such a recognition is absolutely necessary in order to the maintainance of a cordial and affectionate understanding between a benefactor and those upon whom his bounties are bestowed, and proportioned to the extent to which benefits have been conferred, forbearance has been exercised and provision for future welfare, and security has been made, is obviously the duty of thanksgiving as an acknowledgment of these favors. In our intercourse with our fellow men, and in the various relations, by which we are connected with them, there is, for the most part, some measure of mutual obligation; there is generally an opportunity of making some practical and valuable return for kindness shown; and the reciprocity of favour and friendship, which is thus maintained, forms one of the most agreeable and delightful accompaniments of human life. But when we attempt to compare the return we are able to make with the profuse liberality, and the disinterested compassion, which God hath exercised towards us, all measurement is at an end, all proportion is lost. But the very magnitude and variety of God's goodness towards us in providence and grace, and our own

utter inability to make Him any adequate return, bind us by so much the stronger obligation to do what we can, to offer unto Him such an acknowledgment as comports with our character and circumstances.

One of the primary objects in the institution and therefore one of the most important and essential of the component parts of public worship, was to deepen the feeling and to call forth the expression of becoming gratitude for the divine mercies, to collect, as it were from the assembled throng, that tribute of thanksgiving, which is all that Jehovah requires. Under the former dispensation, indeed, more costly acknowledgments were demanded. The worshipper was commanded to bring with him an "offering" when he presented himself within the courts of the Lord's house. He was expected to give some substantial proof of the depth of his contrition and of the sincerity of his gratitude; and under an overwhelming sense of the goodness of God the Psalmist exclaimed "what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." In our case, indeed, the external offering has been superseded by the great sacrifice of Him, who appeared in the fulness of time to offer Himself without spot, to God in our behalf. But the obligation to present unto Him "the calves of our lips." The incense of a devout and grateful heart has thereby been infinitely strengthened and enhanced. When we meet therefore within the walls of his house, it is to take a solemn review of God's gracious dealings with us; it is to read the inventory, and to acknowledge the reception of those

invaluable treasures, which he has laid up for us in Christ, and is ready from day to day to dispense for our benefit: it is to bear a public and unequivocal testimony in the sight of heaven and earth, in the presence of angels and men, to the innumerable blessings which He is incessantly pouring down upon us; it is to recognise Him as that Father of Lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift; it is above all, to thank Him for the unspeakable gift of his only begotten Son; for the means of grace, and the hope of glory.

The means by which this department of divine worship may be suitably and acceptably conducted, are obviously those by which emotions of fervent and reverential gratitude may be most vividly portrayed and most forcibly expressed. For this purpose nothing can be more appropriate than that those, who engage in this work should meet together in fixed places, and at appointed seasons, in order to unite and by uniting to kindle into a stronger blaze, those feelings of gratitude and love, which, abandoned to the chilly solitude of individual reflection, are apt to sink into a state of inactivity and languor. To thank God as we are required, and as we ought, it is not enough that we should be coldly convinced of the obligation as a question of duty, and as an affair of rational calculation. It is not enough that we should argue the point as a first principle of government, or an unequivocal command of scripture: it is not sufficient that we should give the reins to our imagination in dreams of devotional sentimentality and romance, and express in terms of vague generality, our ad-

miration of the benevolence and goodness of the Deity. All this is perfectly compatible with the utter destitution of all genuine gratitude in the heart, of all acceptable praise from the lips. We must go beyond the bare convictions of the understanding; we must not be content with a few sparks of our solitary kindling. We must enlarge and multiply them by collision; we must open our hearts to the beams of the sun of righteousness as they glow in the concentrated sympathies of an assembled multitude, we must avail ourselves of every subsidiary means of rousing our affections into higher ardour, we must meditate upon the divine goodness in its various modes of exercise, until the fire of gratitude kindles within us and our mouth is constrained to speak. We must provide ourselves with words that burn in order to give adequate expression to the intensity of our conjoined emotions; we must take advantage, so far as they may be effective and appropriate of combinations of fancy and of sounds of melody, to give a tone of energy and liveliness to our praises. We must endeavour to touch every chord, to rouse every dormant susceptibility in our intellectual and moral nature. We must with the Psalmist call upon our souls, and upon all that is within us, to praise God's holy name. We must invite those around us to adore the Lord for his goodness, and for the wonders which he doeth for the children of men. In our thanksgivings we must endeavour to rise to the magnitude and variety of our obligations. In our anthems we must labour to become more deeply imbued with the very spirit of those, which re-echo throughout the choir above. In our music,

both vocal and instrumental, we must strive to catch more of the sweet hosannas, those strains of pure and holy harmony, which float upon the gales of the paradise of God.

Having thus cursorily surveyed those parts of our worship, which stand more immediately connected with the glory of God in the highest. We shall now briefly notice those departments of this exalted service, which have a more direct reference to the welfare and benefit of man himself. These indeed may not in the strict sense of the term constitute portions of the proper worship of God ; but as they are naturally connected, and in practice have been usually associated with that homage of devout adoration and praise, which we are bound to render unto God ; they may without impropriety be considered as integral parts of the system. Of these the first which we shall mention is *Prayer* for needed blessings. This division of the sacred work of divine worship is indeed most closely allied to the duty of thanksgiving for past favors. It is moreover in its very grounds and in the whole method of its discharge, a recognition of the Sovereign Majesty of Jehovah and of our entire dependence upon his bounty and forbearance. It is an act of compliance with his direction, of obedience to his authority. The duty of prayer indeed is not confined to the service of the temple. It is not a mere public ceremony observed in accordance with certain reasons of state and maxims of prudential calculation. It is not a piece of empty and unmeaning formality—a scene of idle and imposing pagantry exhibited every seventh day to keep up the appearance of devotion, and a shew of reverence

for the Supreme. The exercise of prayer on the contrary is a duty of daily and hourly obligation. It is coextensive with our necessities, and the effectual and availing performance of it, as essential to our welfare, as our sins are numerous, our danger imminent, and our dependence is absolute and entire.

But although it be our duty, and our privilege, as sinful and dependent beings, thus to pray without ceasing, to be instant in prayer, to pray with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, yet there are seasons and circumstances, which invest this sublime occupation, with a character of peculiar weight and interest. Of the public services of the sanctuary, and of the specific duties of the sabbath, it has always formed a prominent and most delightful part. So large and appropriate a portion of divine worship did this holy work engross under the Mosaic economy, that the temple was designated by the prophet, and subsequently denominated with a corroborating weight of authority by our Saviour Himself—a house of prayer. Within the walls of that house, which has been dedicated to the service of God, his people assemble from one sabbath to another for the express purpose of calling upon his name. Here they meet in delightful accord, in order to raise their united supplications—to join with one heart and one voice, and one language, in pouring forth the commingled tide of their emotions, which may ascend, like the sound of many waters, in grateful and overpowering melody, to the throne of the Majesty on high. And if there be any thing, which can secure a gracious hearing at the hand of God, and bring

down a blessing of pardon and peace and love, it is this effectual fervent prayer of many righteous men, confederated, as it were, in holy league, for laying siege to the mercy seat of Jehovah, and declaring in the language of humble and reverential determination, that they will not abandon the enterprize until He has graciously granted their requests. If when two or three are thus met together in his name, his promise stands pledged that he will be in the midst of them to bless them, with what feelings of satisfaction and benignant kindness does He look down upon a whole assembly, whose every feeling is absorbed in the solemnity of prayer and as the voice of supplication and thanksgiving alternately ascends to his throne, all the people say, Amen, and praise the Lord. Amid such a scene, if the heart be really in unison with the tongue, the mystic vision of the apocalypse would seem to be realized, wherein the new Jerusalem is represented as coming down from heaven, and a great voice is heard saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

In order, however, that men may be duly prepared to enter upon the devotional services of religion, and be supplied with competent knowledge and information to enable them to worship God in spirit and in truth, it is necessary that with the other departments of this comprehensive duty, suitable means should be contrived for the purpose of Exhortation and Instruction. To meet this exigency, and that nothing might be wanting to render the worship of Jehovah an offering of rational and

enlightened, as well as of devout and fervent homage, the word of God, and the exposition and enforcement of its principles have been specially provided. This is an appendage of worship, though subordinate to those, which have preceded, yet in the present condition of our nature of the highest importance in itself. The volume of inspiration, which is the foundation and the textbook of all religious instruction, was given us to be a standing record of the great truths pertaining to our eternal peace and welfare. It is an epitome of the universal history of God's dealings with mankind, a declaration of his whole counsel, a pandect of all the laws and regulations of his moral government. It flowed in direct communication from the fountain of eternal truth, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. And hence the reading of a portion of this inestimable volume has in every age, since it was penned, formed a part of the public worship of God. Through the truths, which are taught and the disclosures, which are made in this sacred book, Jehovah may be considered as holding direct intercourse with men. He addresses them in communications, as purely and perfectly his own as when he conversed with Adam in Paradise, and when he spoke amidst the thunders of Sinai, or inscribed with his own finger the law of the ten commandments upon two tables of stone. A solemn and reverential *Attention* to his word therefore, while it is read in the service of his sanctuary, must be regarded as forming no unimportant con-

stituent of that system of avowed and explicit homage, which He hath instituted for the observance of his people. It is a tribute of veneration for his character, of love to his truth and of willingness to be guided by his wisdom, than which nothing can be more pleasing in his sight.

But as subsidiary to the written word, the ordinance of preaching has always occupied a prominent place in the scheme of the public services of the sabbath. The object of this institution is not to reveal new truths—not to propound new doctrines—not to enforce new obligations; but to bring those which have already been embodied in the records of inspiration to bear in their concentrated light and influence upon the understanding, the heart, and the life. It is to collect, to arrange, and to combine the varied beams of truth, which are scattered over the resplendent page of Revelation, and to reflect them in all their illuminating and transforming power upon the mind, character and conduct. It is to teach, to exhort, to warn and to encourage with all long suffering and doctrine. It is to point out the evil and enormity of sin, the guilt and condemnation of the fall. It is to open the eyes of the impenitent offender to the real danger of his condition. It is to conduct the lightning of Sinai to shiver the heart of stone. It is to proclaim the glad tidings of redeeming love, to unfold the mysteries of the everlasting covenant, and to pour the balm of consolation upon the broken and contrite spirit. It is to maintain the claims of God and the soul, in opposition to the engrossing vanities of the present world: it is to chase away the phantoms of time before the dread

realities of eternity: it is to bring the vast concerns of futurity under their varied aspects of awful and appalling—of animating and refreshing in all the vividness of their coloring before the mind; it is to urge men, without respect of persons, to flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel, and that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this evil world, looking for the glorious appearing of the Lord God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Let the preaching of the gospel be conducted upon these principles, and with a view to these ends, and let it be received with meekness and simplicity, with seriousness and teachableness of spirit, and it cannot fail to be an acceptable, as well as a useful and appropriate portion of that worship, which is offered at the footstool of the Most High.

Such appear to be the leading constituents of that homage which we have already shewn to be binding upon every created intelligence, and to be characterized by knowledge and sincerity, by spirituality of affection, and deep solemnity of deportment. In its relative bearing towards God, it is adoration, thanksgiving and praise: as it more immediately stands connected with our own wants and interests, it is prayer, supplication and instruction through the medium of the inspired word, and of the appointed ordinances of preaching, exposition and practical application of the truth. Have our minds then been filled with sentiments of adoring and overpowering admiration, while we contemplated the several perfections of Jehovah? Have our hearts accompanied our words, and our

voices, while we proclaimed in terms of rapture, or in notes of harmony, the gratitude we owed unto God? Have our prayers been truly entitled to that name, by being the effusions of a deep and unfeigned feeling of the heart. Have we been accustomed to listen to the word of God, and to the preaching of that word, not in a light and captious spirit, not for the purpose of being entertained with novelty, or amused with variety, but with a sincere and unfeigned desire of being led into all truth? If such have been our habits of thought and feeling, then will the language of inspiration be truly descriptive of our conduct—"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for ever and ever, and all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord."

CHAPTER IV.

Family Worship.

It is the prerogative of infinite Wisdom to render a unity of means conducive to a variety of ends. It is Omniscience alone, which, from a view of the numberless capabilities and ultimate tendencies of things, can so arrange their reciprocal bearings as to render them tributary to a great diversity of beneficial effects, while they steadily proceed towards the complete evolution of their eventual and most important result. Like a stream, which finally empties itself into the ocean, but in its progress diffuses verdure and fertility over its banks, and answers a multiplicity of purposes in relation to the comfort and well being of man, the course of the divine administration, while it is designed to issue in the everlasting salvation of the church, branches out into a variety of influences and operations, which are found materially to contribute to the peace and security of human life here on earth. In the dispensations of providence and in the constitution of society, as resulting from divine appointment, there is obviously wheel within wheel, there is action and re-action, there is present effect, and there is future consummation; and there is One, who watches and superintends the whole with an eye, which sees the end from the be-

ginning—One, who directs every event, regulates every movement, controls every instrumental agency, and renders every operation directly or indirectly subservient to the accomplishment of his own gracious and beneficent design.

Of this system of procedure the institution of *Families*, viewed upon scriptural principles, appears to afford a striking illustration. That such an economy is attended with great and extensive advantages of a temporal character, is obvious and universally recognized. Under no other arrangement can we imagine human nature in its present condition as likely to enjoy so much of comfort and happiness. No other plan can we conceive as so well calculated to develope some of the best and liveliest affections of the heart, to call forth the noblest and most generous sentiments of our intellectual and moral being, and to form the character for the exercise of every social and manly virtue. Families are so many enclosures secluded from the tumultuous encroachments and thoroughfares of public commerce, and sacred to the cultivation of every calm, and tranquil, and benevolent disposition—nurseries of thoughts and feelings too delicate and refined for the rough atmosphere of worldly intercourse—temples of peace and concord, whose music would cease to vibrate on the air, if the strings of domestic union were cut in sunder—scenes of mutual tenderness and attachment, in which a thousand nameless charities are exercised from day to day, that would necessarily wither and die, if thrown upon the broad and unclaimed common of our general nature. For the nurture of affections, which could have flourished in no other

soil, but are found here to expand as in a genial clime, families will thus be unquestionably found pre-eminently favorable and congenial.

These however are only subordinate and secondary benefits, connected with this wise and beneficent economy. The appointment of families was intended to subserve still higher purposes. The domestic circle was designed not merely to call forth and to mature the exercise of reciprocal kindness and relative affection, but also to be a seminary for training up the spirits of immortality, having its model in that great family which after Christ is named in heaven and earth, having God for its Father and Ruler—Christ for its elder brother—and the Holy Spirit for the author and medium of its union, sympathy and universal love. Families, if rightly estimated, will thus be found to bear a sacredness of character, and in their collective capacity to stand peculiarly related to the concerns of an eternal world. They are not merely so many aggregations of human beings united by various ties of affinity and dependency, for the purpose of mutual aid, and support, but they are each of them to be a church in miniature—a shrine for the inhabitation of that eternal Spirit, who maketh men to be of one mind in an house. They must obviously therefore be the scenes of all those offices of piety and devotion, which are calculated to answer the great end of the appointment. Among these the regular worship of God must be regarded as a first and indispensable requisite. We have already investigated various points connected with that homage, as an act of public adoration and acknowledgment. We are now therefore to consider

the same subject as an act of family or domestic service. With this view let us first inquire into the *Obligations* of this important duty, and then point out some of the *Benefits* calculated to result from it.

The duty of Family worship is obligatory in the first place as an *Acknowledgment* of the supremacy of Jehovah. Religion is nothing else than a cordial and practical recognition of the various claims of God upon our veneration, love and obedience. As the means of eliciting and exemplifying these habits of feeling and conduct, it is required to spread over the whole range of the character, and to diffuse its influence over every relation and condition in life. In order to produce its legitimate effect, it must be the basis of every social arrangement; the cement of every conventional union; the crown of every subordinate form of earthly government. In every association of human beings whether public or private, in every department of the economy of life there is some specific mode, in which the authority of this all-pervading principle must be distinctly recognised and displayed. And as the domestic union, the family compact is the most intimate and endearing of all others; as it is that which extends the most widely, acts the most constantly, and exerts the most powerful influence over the character and conduct of its members, it follows that in none is the unequivocal maintenance, and the prominent exhibition of the worship of Jehovah more imperatively demanded than in this. It is here, within the retirement of this sacred inclosure, that the character has the fullest and most unfettered op-

portunities of being developed, that the secret springs of action are brought to light, that the governing principles of the conduct are embodied, and that the law inscribed upon the heart is reflected in characters, which he that runs may read. And if in this sanctuary of all that is authoritative and influential in him who presides over its arrangements—if in this refuge from the compromising formalities and the distracting turmoils of life there be no altar erected in acknowledgment of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—no perusal of his word—no reasonable service of prayer and thanksgiving, in which every member of the family may take a cordial and intelligent share, in which the head of the assembled circle may be led to feel and to confess that he is amenable to a higher authority for the exercise of the temporary power, with which he is invested, the servant may be reminded, that there is a Master above, to whom he is supremely accountable for the discharge of the duties incumbent upon him, and the Child may be taught that there is a Father in heaven, who looks down upon his faithful and obedient children with more than parental kindness; if such be the total absence of all ostensible recognition of a superior Being, within what ought to be the shrine of His most deepfelt presence, the fearful presumption is, that the flame of devotional affection is entirely extinct in the heart.

(10) To the public worship of God there attach many reasons and considerations which do not operate with equal effect in securing a due attendance on the service of the domestic altar. Notwithstanding the prevailing degeneracy of the times,

the former, has not altogether lost its hold upon the collective and accredited opinion of the community. It is supported in most cases where a higher principle is wanting, by a sense of decency, propriety and self-respect, and by the consciousness that a certain measure of degradation in the eyes of the most estimable portion of society, would be the inevitable consequence of its total neglect. Worldly policy and all the results of education, honorable principle, and social intercourse, as embodied in the character, here for the most part combine with religious duty. But in the department of worship, which we are now considering, no such auxiliary forces are found to yield their aid. Here the practice, I fear, in an awful majority of instances, among nominal professors of Christianity, has fallen into a state of utter desuetude; and the very prevalence of the neglect, instead of exciting a just alarm, only tends to give a color of justification to its continuance, and to lull the conscience into a fatal and unreflecting security.

In a prayerless family there is something so utterly inconsistent with a due and cordial acknowledgment of Him, who is the supreme Governor of the whole community of heaven and earth, something so much out of keeping with all the demands and proprieties of the Christian character, that it is difficult to conceive how those, who have the direction of such a system of domestic economy, can satisfy their own consciences upon a question of such paramount importance. The absence of any species of social offering at the throne of grace in fact amounts to a practical negation of all religious profession. On this point the very heathen have

taught us a lesson, which may well cause many a nominal Christian to blush, under a sense of his inferiority.⁽⁶⁾ Among them there were not only magnificent temples, stately altars and costly offerings for the celebration of the public ceremonies of their religion; but there were also household gods, domestic divinities, to whom their homage was daily paid, as supposed to exert a more immediate influence upon their family concerns. But among us, comparatively children of light, and heirs of higher privileges, there are numbers, who are content to spend weeks, and months, and years without one distinct acknowledgment of God in their families, who know not what it is to collect their children, or their dependents in decent and devout attendance around the throne of grace, who rise in the morning and enter upon their various occupations without one act of suitable and collective homage to Him, from whom all their blessings flow, who assemble round the evening hearth, but set up no token, consecrate no banner, raise no Ebenezer, no stone of remembrance, as a memorial of divine care and kindness. While every other claim is cheerfully recognized, while the cordialities of mutual affection are called into lively and vigorous exercise, while the demands of friendship, and of social intercourse, are readily and promptly conceded, God is studiously excluded from the circle, and, with reverence be it spoken, instead of being the constantly adored inmate of the family, as He is its best friend and benefactor, He is denied even the privilege of a wayfaring man, who cometh in to tarry for a night. The wicked and profane are described by the Apostle, as those who are without God in the

world; and where such habits, as we have just specified, prevail, must we not say of those, with whom rests the weighty responsibility of the duty, that they are without God in their house. And if they are without God in their house, is it not an apprehension, for which there is too much foundation, that they are without God in their heart? The connection between family religion, and availing personal religion is close, intimate and decisive. And hence we argue the necessity, as well as the obligation, of domestic worship, as an acknowledgment of the supremacy of Jehovah, and an ostensible profession of a covenant relation, unto Him as our God.

Another ground of obligation belonging to the exercise of Family Worship is that, it is a fulfilment of *Relative Duty*. The performance of this holy service is not only due as an acknowledgment unto God, but it is also a means of grace which, as it is calculated to be eminently conducive to the spiritual welfare of the younger, and subordinate members of a family, may be justly considered as falling within the range of relative obligation. The domestic constitution was doubtless instituted and is eminently adapted for the furtherance of the spiritual and eternal welfare of those, who are placed under its jurisdiction. The head of every family was designed to be also its priest and its prophet, so far as the analogy of these offices may be expressive of a duty to teach and to exhort and to lead the devotions of a household. It is the business of one, who occupies that arduous and responsible relation to convert his house into a temple, and to omit no prudent and justifiable means

of making all the members of his family, in a subordinate sense, a holy priesthood—a peculiar people. On him rests the weighty obligation of training them up for the service of God and the delights of immortality. It is his office to teach them both by precept and example, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness—to lift up a standard of religious profession inscribed with characters broad, palpable and unequivocal within the walls of his own house. It is his to tell in language the most significant and decisive—“as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” It is his to lift aloft the torch of divine truth in all its purity and brightness before their eyes, and to allure them by his persuasions, and to engage them by his intercessions to choose those paths of wisdom, which are paths of pleasantness, and her ways, which are ways of peace. It is his to be, as it were, a medium of intercourse between them and God—to be their mouth in addressing Him in language of the profoundest humility, and of the most fervent adoration. It is his to teach the truths of God diligently to his children, and to talk of them, when he sitteth in his house, and when he walketh by the way, and when he lieth down and when he riseth up—to bind them for a sign upon his hand, and to place them as frontlets between his eyes, and to write them upon the posts of his house, and on his gates.

Such is the urgency, the extent, the universality of that obligation, which devolves upon the head of a family to instruct, to exhort and to train up its members, whether children or domestics, in the faithful and devoted service of God. This is

his bounden duty in the relative capacity, which he sustains towards them, and for the wilful neglect of this, if they perish, their blood will be required at his hands. Nor is the obligation binding only upon one party in the domestic compact. It extends on the contrary to every member. If it be the duty of one to assemble his household together at the stated hour, for the purpose of calling upon God, it is the duty of the rest to yield cheerful obedience to the summons—to enter with simplicity and alacrity of mind upon a service, which is equally interesting and important unto all—to listen with reverence and attention to the scriptures, which may be read or the instructions, which may be grounded upon them, and to join with sincerity, fervour and delight in the supplications or thanksgivings, which may be offered up at the throne of grace. Although the maintenance of domestic worship be the especial business of him, who presides over the arrangements of a family, yet the character and acceptableness of the service—its tendency to answer the great end of its institution will entirely depend upon the seriousness, the sobriety and the earnestness of spirit, with which the combined sacrifice is offered up. To be effective, the intensity of the devotional emotion must pass, like an electric shock through the whole circle, and ascend as on wings of lightning to the very bosom of God. The unction of the Holy One, like the sacred oil on the high priest's garments, must flow with a soothing and refreshing influence from the head to the remotest extremities. Thus viewed in its relative bearing the duty of worshipping God in our families, assumes a character of the

most solemn and impressive obligation ; and it is only by a cordial and affectionate union of feeling in its discharge, that Jehovah will be the God of our families, and that we shall be his people.

In addition however to these general grounds of obligation, the duty of domestic worship is binding as a compliance with the *Obvious Intimations* of the divine will. I place this important service upon the footing of implied injunction and indirect declaration, rather than of positive precept, because it is one of those duties, which must considerably vary in the mode of their performance, according to the dispensations of the Church and the prevailing usages of society, and with reference to which therefore specific commands would have been neither necessary nor appropriate. The great question of duty, respecting which there could be no difference in any age, or country, or condition of life, is, that God should be distinctly acknowledged and devoutly adored, as an essential and indispensable part of the domestic economy of every aggregation of human beings dwelling together under the same roof and recognizing the authority of some leading and presiding member. That such is the will of God, and that such under necessary modifications has been the practice of his people in every age of the world, and under every economy of the church is evident from the whole tenor of scripture. Family religion throughout every period has formed one of the most distinguished features of the faithful worshippers of Jehovah, and it sometimes happened, as in the case of Lot and of Noah, that the piety of a devout and holy parent, was rewarded by special

marks of divine favour, extended to the several members of his household. The venerable sages of the patriarchal dispensation, whether they dwelt in settled abodes or followed the leadings of providence in migratory excursions throughout the land of their pilgrimage, ever made it their first care to commit themselves and theirs to the protection of their omnipotent Guardian by some act of distinct and united homage. If they reposed but a single night upon the green sod, with the skies for their canopy and the stars of heaven to light them to their rest, they never forgot to erect a memorial to their God. They turned their pillow into an altar, and in the absence of a more costly gift, they offered upon it the sacrifice most pleasing and acceptable of all others—the homage of a grateful heart. As we advance with the progressive developement of the principles of true religion, we find the duty of domestic instruction and of the devotional service, with which in order to be effective, it must be associated, enforced with proportionate solemnity and distinctness. We find Joshua, in particular, declaring in language of firm and holy resolution, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,” thus pledging himself in the presence of the congregation, and in the behalf of his family, that with them the worship of Jehovah would be a prominent and distinguishing badge of their profession. When the Jewish ceremonial had now been fully established, family religion, through the medium of various domestic rites and institutions, was brought out into fuller and more palpable manifestation, and the morning and evening sacrifice formed one continual memen-

to, one significant symbol of that tribute of homage and praise, which every family owes to the God, whom it professes to serve. And if we wanted any other proof of this impressive service being within the range of the direct and absolute demands of God, we have only to recall to our recollection the awful judgments, which he denounces against the "families," which call not upon his name. So perfectly in unison indeed, in reference to this subject, has the will of God been with the universal practice of his people, that the maintenance of family worship may be fairly asserted to have gone hand in hand with the other appropriate duties of true religion throughout the whole history of the church upon earth. On these grounds therefore we confidently rest the obligation of the duty, which we are now endeavouring to enforce. We are bound to it by considerations the most authoritative and commanding—as an acknowledgment of the supremacy of Jehovah in an ostensible profession of devotedness to his service—as a fulfilment of an important relative duty; and finally as a compliance with the most obvious intimations of the divine will, as conveyed in unequivocal declarations of his word; and embodied in the uniform conduct of his people in every age of the world; and throughout every region of the globe.

It only remains that we notice briefly the *Advantages* calculated to result from a due and regular observance of a duty so decisive and paramount in its obligation. Among many that might be specified, we may observe, in general, its eminent and unquestionable tendency to promote the *Spiritual Welfare* of the several members of a family.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the supreme and unrivalled importance of this object, to point out how greatly it exceeds—how far it transcends every temporal and secondary interest. This may be fairly taken for granted as forming a part of the fixt opinions—of the deep conviction and deliberate judgment of every man, who is not a stranger to serious thought. The promotion of this object should also be regarded as the imperative and bounden duty of every head of a family. He is within due limitations accountable for the spiritual interests of those, who are placed under his direction and control. Whatever is, therefore, calculated to aid him in the exercise of a trust so sacred and responsible—in the discharge of obligations so weighty and comprehensive, must unquestionably be considered as in the highest degree beneficial and advantageous. If the care of the soul, as the duty and interest of individuals, be the one thing needful, that which has an obvious tendency to advance its welfare and to secure its final salvation, must evidently be deemed as the one thing really important.

That the worship of God, conducted in a solemn and edifying manner, is eminently conducive to this great end, must be apparent from the very nature and circumstances of the service. It is an exercise, in which every thing is calculated to enlighten the understanding—to engage the affections and to impress the heart. It is a standard lifted up for God, inscribed with characters, which invite all to respect and honor Him. It is a testimony borne in the most influential quarter to the paramount claims and the transcendent excellency

of religion. It exhibits it in its genuine character and dignity, as entitled to the first and last thoughts of the day, as ushering in the occupations of the morning, and as sealing up the thoughts and feelings at the evening's close, with the impress of devotional homage. It commands the attendance of those, who might otherwise find no time for a due regard to the things of eternity, it brings the word of God before those, who might otherwise be utterly ignorant of it; it compels the most thoughtless, for a time, to reflect; the most frivolous for a while to be grave. It brings those to prostrate themselves before the throne of grace, who else might never bend their knees. It obliges those, who might never pray for themselves, to listen to the supplications and intercessions of others in their behalf. It thus acts like coals of fire heaped upon their head, softening them into penitence and love, elevating them to faith and holiness. The young it teaches from the earliest age to recognise the God of their parents, to honor his name, to revere his word, to lisp his praise, and indissolubly to connect his service with every tender association of home and of kindred, of a father's blessing, and of a mother's prayers. It is calculated to humble and to bring down the highest members of the household, when they are brought to confess in common with the meanest, that they are poor and miserable sinners, to elevate and dignify the feelings of the lowest, when they perceive that they are allowed to kneel around the same throne, and to address themselves to the same mercy seat. And, correspondent with the spiritual privileges and advantages thus connected with domestic worship, have

frequently been the blessings, which have actually issued from it. Many there are, who can trace their first religious impressions to this service, who have continued through life to shine with the benignant light of that flame, which was first kindled at the family altar, and which will burn with increasing brightness until it be lost in the splendours of everlasting day.

As a subordinate and collateral advantage, of no ordinary importance connected with the regular and devout exercise of family worship, we may mention that it is pre-eminently conducive to *domestic peace, harmony and order*. Where any number of human beings, surrounded with the ordinary failings and infirmities of our fallen nature, are associated together in bonds of temporary or permanent fellowship, it can scarcely be expected that occasional collisions of feeling should not take place; where neglect and impatience, authority and disobedience, undue demand and inadequate performance are brought into contact with each other, it is hardly possible that irritation should not in some measure be excited. If there be no healing balm, no unction of the Holy One, to allay the inflammation, no oil of gladness and consolation to smoothe the troubled waters; irritation will arise into loud and unseemly altercation, and altercation will pass into settled habits of wrath and hatred, of variance and strife. For the prevention of the growth of these foes of domestic peace and comfort, I know of no more effectual means, than the practice of daily assembling together, with feelings of humiliation, benevolence and chastened delight around a common altar. It was the system of the ancients,

both Jews and Heathen, to establish peace or to confirm their contracts by sacrifice. Parties which had been at variance, met in the presence of the Divinity, in order to bury their mutual animosity, and to enter into a league of peace.⁽⁷⁾ Thus the family, which is collected at the commencement and the close of every successive day, for the purpose of united homage, has a choice opportunity of reconciling its differences, and of soothing its perturbed emotions. Upon the altar of that service every hostile feeling, every angry passion, every rebellious or overbearing disposition, every root of bitterness, every noxious weed of envy, malice and discontent must be cast in order to be utterly annihilated and consumed. Within the shrine, which incloses that altar, every thing is kindness, unanimity and concord—every thing is meekness, gentleness and forbearance, every thing is forgiveness, humility and love. And the very necessity of thus meeting together face to face in the immediate presence of the Most High, is the best security for the maintenance of that serenity of mind and temper—that holy sunshine of the soul, which is at once the brightest reflection and the most soothing anticipation of heavenly bliss.

If such then be the obligations and advantages of this department of the worship of Jehovah, need I say any more to urge it on attention and habitual practice? The prevailing neglect of this duty I consider to be one of the crying sins of the land, and I can imagine nothing that would secure a more copious supply of national blessings, than if it was universally adopted among us, and performed with sincerity and devotion. Let us enter upon it

therefore, without procrastination or reserve. No longer let us exhibit before our servants or children the unseemly spectacle of a prayerless family. Let our habitations be at once consecrated into temples and our hearts into burning altars of gratitude and affection. Then will the cloud of the divine presence rest upon our tabernacle, and when our earthly house has been dissolved, we shall have a building of God—a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.⁽⁸⁾

PART SECOND.

THE ORDINANCE OF THE SABBATH.

CHAPTER I.

The Design of the Sabbath.

THE commandments of God have not unfrequently been divided into two classes—the *Moral* as being absolute, unchangeable and eternal in their obligation, and as incorporated into the very constitution of things, and the *Positive*, as being for the most part of temporary duration and expediency, and deriving all their force from the authoritative will of the Supreme Ruler. The former are necessarily binding upon all rational and accountable beings, inasmuch as independently of all direct injunction, they are essential to the welfare and preservation of the species to whose character and circumstances they apply. The latter, though doubtless founded in the best reasons, and directed to some important end, would not have been recognized as directories of duty, unless they had

been distinctly specified and enforced as such. The moral precept carries with it an obligation obviously arising out of the established relations and the eternal fitness of things. It would seem therefore that it was embodied into a command because it was previously right. The positive injunction, on the contrary, is supposed to bear something more of a fugitive and arbitrary, or as we would rather express it, of a sovereign and temporary character, as springing from some peculiar circumstances, and adapted only to a limited period of duration.

Much, doubtless, of the apparent difference between these two orders of divine commands, arises from our ignorance or imperfect apprehension of their respective grounds and reasons. Both are equally binding upon our observance and obedience, because both are alike expressions of the divine will, conveyed by somewhat different means, and adapted to different circumstances and conditions of our nature. The law delivered on mount Sinai is an outline of the great principles of moral government, a transcript of the mind of Deity, an epitome of that constitution, which has been devised and established by infinite wisdom for the regulation of the intelligent universe—a code of practical institutes, which is as immutable as the nature and purpose of Jehovah, and capable of being adapted under slight modifications, to the direction of the character and conduct of human beings, under every successive economy, and amidst all the revolutions of their earthly destiny. The law of the Mosaic ritual, on the other hand, though emanating from the same source, and directed to the same general object, and therefore clad with

the same authority, was avowedly intended only for a particular and temporary order of circumstances, and consequently ceased to be in force as soon as the object of its institution had been attained. It was designed to be only a shadow of things to come. It was an atmosphere of clouds surrounding the tabernacle of the church, during the season of its morning twilight, admirably adapted to refract the distant beams of the sun of righteousness, but destined, as soon as that glorious luminary had risen above the horizon, to melt into the pure sunshine of evangelical light.

It can hardly be necessary to remark that the law of the Sabbath, has been embodied into the first of these two classes. Although in the phraseology, by which it is expressed, and in the minor details of its injunctions, it bears something of the character of a positive institution, as it was developed in its application to the condition of the Jewish church, yet its very locality, as placed in the centre of the decalogue, and the fact of its being nothing more than an amplified republication of an edict, which was issued at the dawn of the creation, coupled with the total absence of the slightest hint that it was only a component part of that system of types and shadows, which was to be abrogated at the introduction of the more perfect and substantial economy of the gospel—all these considerations seem clearly to demonstrate that the sabbath was not one of those byelaws, which were intended to be coextensive with the prevalence and duration of a preparatory ecclesiastical constitution, but that it was made for man in the universality of his nature, as bound to surrender a due

proportion of his time to the immediate and exclusive service of his Creator. This is the light, in which we propose to view the Sabbath. If it be, as we have endeavoured in the preceding chapters to shew, the imperative duty of man to yield a public and regular homage unto God through the medium of the several modes of his appointed worship, it is obvious that there must, in the present condition of our existence as principally engrossed by the affairs of time and sense, be a particular and definite season assigned and consecrated to this specific object. Independently of all direct intimation to that effect, this would have unquestionably appeared necessary to the suitable and availing observance of the duty of divine worship. It is this consideration therefore, which connects the institution of the Sabbath with those acts of adoration, and those rights of homage which man owes to his Maker, and as long as the latter are obligatory, so long in a state of probationary discipline will the former be undoubtedly in force. In the discussion of this important subject—important in itself and rendered doubly important by the lamentable neglect and profanation of the ordinance, which so extensively prevails among us—I shall be led to consider the Design and the universal Obligation of the Sabbath—the peculiar and appropriate Duties of the Sabbath, and the Benefits calculated to result from its due and conscientious observance. In the present chapter I shall confine myself to the first of these points—*The Original Design of the Sabbath.*

In illustration of this point I would remark, in the first place, that it was designed to be a standing

Memorial of the two most important events in the whole history of the universe—the creation of the world and the resurrection of the Saviour. It was doubtless not without a specific object—without some worthy end in view that Jehovah was pleased to spread the work of creation over six successive days. He might with equal ease have called forth the goodly frame of nature in all its completeness, symmetry and beauty, and peopled it with the varied forms of animated existence by a single word of his mouth, as by the more regular and tardy process, which He was pleased to adopt. He might have moulded chaos into form—He might have replenished the ocean with its finny inhabitants—He might have clothed the fields with verdure and the forest with trees—He might have spread the curtain of the sky and arranged the host of heaven, as so many glittering lamps suspended from the golden ceiling—without one moment's delay, and without the slightest additional effort. But it appeared right to his infinite wisdom to act otherwise. He divided his mighty works into six distinct portions ; and to every successive day its own share of the effects of creative energy was assigned.⁽⁶⁾ And when the whole had now been accomplished—when from the height of his essential glory—a height raised far above all created existence He took a survey of the works of his hands, and saw that every thing, which he had made, was very good, He took a holy satisfaction in the contemplation of the achievements of his combined perfections. He was conscious of a pure and sublime complacency in the view of that vast theatre of beneficence, which He had just called into being.

And in order to mark the delight, which He experienced in the survey, and to commemorate the completion of his stupendous undertaking, it is said that He blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all his work, which God created and made. He was desirous that a consummation so glorious and astonishing in itself, and so honorable to all the perfections of his nature should be remembered, amidst associations of the most fervent gratitude and the most profound adoration throughout the whole history of the world. He thus set apart one day in seven for the express purpose of affording men an opportunity, throughout every future age, of reading the magnificent volume of creation and of adoring the attributes of Him, by whose counsel and might the whole mass of its subject matter was elaborated into form, its various sections were arranged and its golden characters were engraved. The appointment of this day was thus intended to be an ever-during record among men that it was no blind chance,—no fortuitous concourse of atoms—no dark and lawless destiny, which gave us this beautiful and magnificent frame of things, but that it was begun, carried on in successive order, and eventually consummated by Him, who is unfathomable in wisdom, boundless in beneficence and unlimited in power.

Under the evangelical economy, which on various grounds, may be considered as a new moral creation, the sabbath institution answers, with remarkable propriety and effect, the additional purpose of commemorating the resurrection of the Saviour from the grave. Having, not without ade-

quate grounds, been transferred to the day, on which his glorious triumph over the powers of death and the grave was achieved; it brings that most stupendous and interesting event before our view, in the manner and under the circumstances best calculated to strengthen our faith, to confirm our hope, and to warm and elevate our affections. It reminds us by its impressive and hallowed associations of Him, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. It leads us back to that auspicious morn, which we may justly regard as the herald of our highest hopes, the dawn of our blissful immortality. It fixes our attention upon that which is the foundation of all our expectations, the seal of our redemption, the pledge of our everlasting salvation. Every seventh sun which rises above our horizon, lights us to the tomb of Immanuel, not however to mourn over his decease, not to contemplate the expected author of our deliverance inclosed within its indissoluble barriers, not to weep over his cold and lifeless frame imprisoned within its dark repository; but to behold its door burst open, the stone rolled away from its mouth, and its tenant leaving his bands behind him escaped from its captive hold—to look with a firm and fearless eye into its interior, and to see its solitude cheered, and its gloom illumined by the presence of angelic messengers, announcing that he is not there but is risen, and thus to celebrate his victory, as affording strong consolation and incontrovertible evidence, that we also, having rested awhile within the same dark mansion, shall ere long rise triumphant, and finally be more than conquerors through Him, that hath loved us, and given himself for us, even the Lord our righteousness.

Another object in the original institution of the sabbath, we may justly assume to have been, that it might be an authoritative intimation of the *claims of God* upon our time. It is true indeed, that all our time, and every other talent, wherewith we have been blessed, were originally derived from Him, and primarily belong unto Him. But he hath been pleased to relinquish a large proportion of these gifts to our own exclusive and entire benefit. By far the largest share of our time He hath allowed us, in subordination to his will, to employ for our own immediate purposes. Having spent six days in preparing this beautiful and glorious structure of the material universe, for our convenience and accommodation, He hath permitted us the use of a similar period for the main pursuit of those habits and occupations which are more directly connected with the supply of our own wants and the promotion of our secular interests. And as He himself rested on the seventh day, for the purpose of contemplating the order and beauty, the symmetry and utility of the various works of his hands, so He requires of us, that we should devote the seventh portion of our time, as a just and equitable acknowledgment, that to him we are indebted for the whole. This was no more than his wisdom suggested, that He might rightly demand, and man might conveniently afford. It is the tribute, which he has deemed it fit to levy upon our time as part of that revenue, to which he is entitled as our Sovereign Lord. He has instituted and enforced it in maintenance of that authority, which he unquestionably possesses over all the works of his hands. The seventh day He claims as entirely and unre-

servedly his own. It is the day, which in an especial manner the Lord hath made for Himself, the day of his rest, of his calm and dignified repose, after the six days' work had been completed. It was intended to remind men that they are constantly amenable to a higher power, that they are accountable for every hour of their existence to Him, by whom their days were numbered, that He has demanded one specific portion as an intimation that He might have demanded the whole, and that it is impossible, without the grossest and most direct sacrilege, to withhold from him any measure of our time, which he might have required at our hands.

In connection with and subordinately to higher purposes, we may also conceive it to have entered into the original plan in the appointment of a sabbath, that it should afford a season of needful *Rest* both to man and beast. This indeed is one of the first and most prominent ideas associated with this holy day. It is that which is conveyed in the very meaning of the term. The Sabbath is preeminently a day of rest—a day of cessation from the ordinary toils and occupations of the world. It is a day, which has been carried down in uninterrupted exemption from secular labour and business from the time of innocence—from the lovely scenes of paradise until the present hour. It is a season graciously and condescendingly appointed for the purpose of affording our minds an opportunity of recovering their tone, and our bodies of refreshing and invigorating their strength. Of the enjoyment of this repose Jehovah himself gave an example, in that He rested on the seventh day, and hallowed

it. The constitution of man in the present state, is not adapted to vigorous and incessant application. It requires intervals of rest and comparative inactivity; not indeed that it may sink into languor and inertness, either physical or intellectual, than which nothing can be more injurious and destructive, but that it may be maintained in a healthful and effective play—that it may recover its wasted energies and gather strength for renewed effort. It was with this view that the gracious and compassionate Jehovah set apart one day in seven to be observed during the whole continuance of the present system, and guarded it by the most solemn prohibitions, as a day of complete abstinence from the ordinary pursuits of life. Its object was to relax at suitable intervals the sinews of labour in order that they might be afterwards wound up into a higher pitch of energy and tension. It was to set the mind at liberty for a while from the trammels of worldly thought and anxiety—to afford it a calm and secluded refuge from the harassing, encroaching and overpowering turmoils of the world, that in this stillness of the moral atmosphere it might more freely expand its wings, and rise in holy contemplation and affection towards the realms of uncreated light.

But a still higher and more important object in the institution of the sabbath, was that man might thereby have an opportunity of cordially worshipping his Creator, and of cultivating habits of closer and more intimate fellowship with Him. This was doubtless the great moral end of the ordinance to which all other objects must be regarded as secondary and subordinate. It was for this purpose that

God not only rested on the sabbath, but also sanctified it. He attached to it a character of peculiar sacredness, that it might not only be commemorative of past events, but also conducive to the advancement of the future welfare and security of man. It was intended to be in the strictest sense a religious, a holy, a spiritual institution. If no such day had been appointed, if no season had been set apart for the exclusive service of Jehovah, and the pursuit of eternal things, if man had been left entirely to his own discretion with respect to the portion of time which he should have deemed it right, or thought it necessary and convenient to assign to the worship of his Creator, and the work of his own salvation, the probability, rather the certainty, is, that both would have been neglected, and abandoned altogether. We find that with all the awful sanctions by which the sabbath institution is enforced in the divine commands—that with all the barriers, which human laws have thrown around it, for the purpose of more securely guarding it from violation, still under some pretence or other, under some plea of necessity or expediency, there is a continual proneness in man to encroach upon its sacredness, and to break down that broad and palpable line of demarcation, by which it is separated from other days. We find that human depravity, impiety and indifference, like so many turbid waves, are incessantly bursting and foaming over that inclosure, which the divine law hath drawn around the Sabbath ordinance, and attempting to level every distinction between holy and profane—between secular and sacred, and to deluge the land with a flood of immorality and vice. With

many indeed between the twofold claims of pleasure and business—of indolence and worldly activity the difference is well nigh abolished. The characters of sacredness which the finger of Deity has so deeply engraven on the hallowed pillar of the sabbath, and which have borne the brunt of the varied elements of ungodliness and sin for nearly six thousand years, have been almost entirely obliterated ; and estimated by their conduct the institution stands forth to the view as some faded monument of past superstition, suspended indeed over the altar of our churches, but having long since ceased to be legible to the eye or authoritative on the habits of the community.

And if with all these sanctions human and divine surrounding the sanctuary of the Sabbath, it be still found so difficult to guard it from profanation, and to engage men to devote it to those purposes of piety and spirituality, for which it was peculiarly and exclusively designed, into what utter neglect would the worship of God have fallen, what complete oblivion of the truths of religion and of the concerns of another world would have covered the earth, if no such ordinance had been appointed. It was to prevent this overflowing of ungodliness—it was to check the progress of this Egyptian gloom—it was to afford men a regular and frequent opportunity of calling their ways to remembrance—of directing their attention, undisturbed by the occupations and encroachments of the affairs of the present life, to the stupendous realities of eternity—of engaging in the worship of Jehovah on a day felt to be sacred and authoritatively devoted to that sublime exercise, and of

cherishing those habits of intimate fellowship and communion with Him, which are essential to the maintenance of true religion in the soul, it was for these several purposes that God was pleased, at the very commencement of his moral government, to appoint one day in seven for his especial service, and to form, as it were, a connecting link between the interests and associations of heaven and earth. In this institution provision was made for the honor of God, and for fulfilling the highest destinies of man. In its continuance under the Christian dispensation, we have the inestimable privilege of waiting upon God as revealed unto us in his Son, of having the wonders of redeeming love brought before our calm and deliberate survey, of dwelling in hallowed recollection and with emotions of glowing gratitude and affection upon the scenes of Bethlehem, of Gethsemane and of Calvary, and of stirring up in our hearts those gifts of the Spirit, which, without such periodical excitements, would be in danger of being smothered under an overwhelming mass of carnality and earthliness.

As another element in the great Design of Jehovah, in the original institution of the sabbath, we may mention again, that it was intended to operate as an important instrument in keeping up the *Influence* and *Practice* of true religion in the world. If the ordinance of the sabbath has a tendency to promote the objects, and to answer the purposes previously specified, it follows as a necessary consequence, that it should have the effect of maintaining the interests and upholding the dominion of holiness and piety upon earth. Indeed I am persuaded that the appointment and due obser-

vance of the sabbath, are not only calculated to advance, but that they are, always have been, and in the present world, ever will be, inseparably connected with, these objects. There has never yet been a period in the whole history of the world, and under any dispensation of religion, when true piety was flourishing, and practically influential, without being associated with a feeling of profound reverence for, and a habit of strict and conscientious observance of the sabbath. Whether we contemplate the character of individuals, or the prevailing habits of society, we shall find the sanctification of the sabbath and influential practical religion spreading over the same extent, and rising to the same level. Wherever that early intimation of the divine will, which marked the conclusion of the six days' work, is neglected, it may be admitted as an induction confirmed by the experience of six thousand years, that there religion exerts no powerful, commanding and all pervading influence. Point out to me the age, in which the sabbath was wilfully and uniformly neglected and profaned, and I will undertake to shew, that it was an age of irreligion, depravity and vice. Let the individual be marked out, who was notorious for his disregard of the appropriate duties of the sabbath, and I will demonstrate, from other parts of his character, that he had not the love of God shed abroad in his heart, that he had not the fear of God before his eyes, and that to walk in the commandments and ordinances of God blameless, was not his habitual and daily practice. The whole history of the church, and of the world is, in fact, one vast chain of connected and accumulated evidence that the sabbath

in its various privileges, ordinances and effects, was designed to be one of the chief instruments of the divine government, one of the most efficient means in the hands of the Holy Spirit, for the maintenance and extension of the influence, and for the practical exemplification of the principles of true religion in the world. It cannot be doubted therefore, that this was a leading object in the mind of Jehovah, at the original appointment, and in every subsequent confirmation of the ordinance.

I remark once more, that the sabbath in addition to other objects, for which it was instituted, was designed to be a *Type* and a *Foretaste* of the rest of heaven. The present life, at the best, is a scene of much labour and toil, of vexation, anguish and grief: It is a succession of anxieties and alarms, of disquietudes and fatigues. Its days are days of effort and exhaustion, and its nights are frequently nights of watching. It is a pilgrimage through a wilderness, where the difficulties are many and great, where the dangers are numerous and imminent, where the enemies are powerful and malignant, where the supply of spiritual sustenance and consolation is scanty, and scarce adequate to the heat and burden of the day. Under these circumstances, it is not a little cheering and gratifying to the true Christian, to be forcibly reminded every seventh day, that there is a rest which remaineth for the people of God. The joyful and complacent repose of Jehovah after the completion of his six days' work, afforded a delightful emblem of that soothing quietude, of that blissful tranquillity, which the children of God shall enjoy after the toils of life and the sorrows of mortality are past.

Of that scene of celestial serenity and joy, of peaceful and undisturbed enjoyment, the occupations of a devotional and well regulated Sabbath afford one of the most striking and vivid representations. In this hallowed season we behold as in a mirror the serene glories, the sublime and unfatiguing occupations of the heavenly world. In its still and noiseless retirement, we have a picture of the sequestered and meditative contemplations of the paradise of God ; in its public ordinances—in its fervent and devout supplications—in its rapturous praises and its ardent thanksgivings it gives a realizing vision of the scenes of the temple, which is above, where the service never ends—where the Sabbath-sun never goes down—where the worshippers are never weary and the choral symphonies of Hosannah in the highest never cease to resound. Analogies so striking and impressive could not have been overlooked—objects so encouraging and important could not have been left out of the design, with which the sabbath was originally instituted. As the sabbath appears so peculiarly calculated to symbolize the rest and to antedate the bliss of heaven, this is doubtless one of the manifold functions, which the ordinance was intended to answer.

These appear to be the leading constituents of that great and comprehensive design, with which the Sabbath institution was established. And let me put it seriously and pointedly to the conscience of the reader, how far these objects have been realized and attained in his own case. Have you been led by it to a devout and grateful contemplation of those great events, the creation of the world, and the resurrection of the Saviour, which

it was primarily intended to commemorate? Have you been engaged by it cheerfully to recognize the claims of Jehovah upon your time, and your every endowment? Have you regarded it, so far as is practicable, as a day of rest for yourself and those under your control, from the distracting occupations, and the unseemly amusements and recreations of the world? Have you availed yourself of the inestimable opportunity it has afforded you, of acquainting yourself with God and of cultivating habits of closer and more intimate fellowship with Him? Have you endeavoured in your own conduct and by your own example to carry its object into effect in the maintenance of the influence and practice of true religion in the world. And finally have you been accustomed to regard it as affording not only a vivid representation, but also a sweet and soothing antepast of the joys of the celestial world? If these happy effects have been in any measure realized in your case, then have you good ground to hope that the gracious purposes of Jehovah will not be lost upon you, but that at the appointed time you will receive the end of all his dealings and dispensations towards you in the blissful fruitions of eternity.

CHAPTER II.

The Universal Obligation of the Sabbath.

WHEN any line of conduct or practical observance is enjoined, which would seem to be at variance with the secular interests or the prevailing habits and inclinations of those, on whom it is enforced, it is of the utmost importance that there should be a clear perception of the grounds upon which it is founded. If it be a definite and unequivocal requirement of Jehovah, if it stand intimately connected with the spiritual and eternal welfare of those, on whose attention it is urged, too much care cannot be taken that its principles be fully understood, its reasons be duly appreciated, and its obligation be distinctly recognized. It will not avail to know the claims of such an ordinance, upon the calculations of a doubtful and shortsighted expediency. It is neither safe nor just to refer the case to the bare speculations of human judgment, and to place it upon the shifting and insecure footing of custom, and conventional arrangement. If it forms part of the service and homage, which we im-

mediately owe unto God as having received the sanction and authority of his express command, then it ought not to be viewed as deriving its force and its practical significancy from the bare enactments of human laws, although as subsidiary to a higher power, and explanatory of the divine requisition, these are perfectly admissible, and may be of much advantage.⁽⁹⁾ It is not right thus to trifle with the great principles of human duty, to break with a rash and inconsiderate hand, the broad seal of the Eternal, which had been palpably attached to any institution, in order to stamp it with the feeble and fluctuating impress of earthly power, to dash in pieces that table of the covenant, on which it was inscribed by the finger of God, in order to engrave it upon the perishable records of human legislation, or human expediency.

To the subject before us, the duty of sanctifying and strictly observing the sabbath, these remarks apply with peculiar force. There are those, who deny the obligatory character of this sacred ordinance, deeming it to have been like many of the Jewish institutions, of a national and temporary character; others without questioning its accordance with the general will of God, place it entirely on the footing of usefulness and propriety, and would limit its claims upon our observance by the considerations, which are thereby suggested, Emboldened by these gratuitous speculations, some have been led to cast off the authority of the sabbath altogether. Others are disposed to yield it a reluctant homage, extorted by those legislative prohibitions, which make the observance of the sabbath a part of the established constitution of the

land, and reduced to the lowest possible measure, consistent with decency and social propriety. Instead of raising the standard of the sabbath institution to the high order of spirituality and devotional sanctity, exhibited in the demands of scripture, they bring it down to a level with the most ordinary prescriptions of human authority. In order that the sabbath may be regarded in its proper light, and realize its legitimate purposes, in order that it may raise the mind to that tone of elevation and abstraction from worldly cares and interests, without which it cannot suitably hold communion with God, that it may be surrounded with an atmosphere of purity and sacredness, which will render it the most appropriate and congenial medium for carrying on that sublime intercourse between heaven and earth, which it was mainly intended to promote, it is necessary that it should be associated in the mind with the immediate authority of Jehovah. It must be viewed as emanating from his sovereign will, and as bearing on every part of it, the impress of his unequivocal sanction. It must be considered not as a mere ordinance of man, to which submission is to be yielded for the Lord's sake, as an acquiescence in the general arrangements of civil government, but it must be regarded as one of those primary obligations which originated in an express declaration of the Eternal mind, and which social habits, secular conveniences, and statutory enactments can only guard from gross violation and encroachment. It is only by thus connecting the day with the will and the authority of the Supreme, and by viewing it as a portion of that moral regimen,

which he hath instituted, as a wheel in that vast machinery, which is moved and animated by his spirit, that the great and glorious objects of its appointment can be really obtained. We have already considered the design of this institution as it branches out into a variety of co-ordinate purposes. We shall now proceed therefore to a more particular investigation of the second department of the subject—the *Grounds* upon which the observance of the sabbath is to be regarded as a duty, universally binding upon men.

The perpetual and universal *Obligation* of the sabbath may be argued first, from the *Antiquity* of its institution. The peculiar sacredness of the seventh day is evidently not the result of any recent or modern enactment. It is not the effect of any constitution of things, which arose at some intermediate period in the history of the world. It is not like the sabbath of weeks, or the sabbath of the jubilee, the appendage of a transitory economy, an adaptation to an order of circumstances and localities, which was of necessity temporary in its duration, and limited in its extent. The sabbath of every seventh successive day, on the contrary, as a day of rest, and holy contemplation, as a day characterized by a peculiar sanctity, and consecrated to holy and devout occupations, is as old as the creation itself. It was indeed the first day, which the world in its consummation and perfection ever saw. It was the starting point in the career of nature. It was the day of dedication, in which the vast temple of the universe was solemnly set apart for the honor and service of its great and glorious Author. It was the day of holy and rap-

turous adoration, on which the sons of God, the intelligences of heaven and earth were invited to celebrate the Creation and to rejoice over the destinies of a new born world. It was moreover the first whole day in the history of man's existence, on which his eyes were opened, after the work of creation was completed, thus intimating, that the first fruits of his time, the primary exercise of his powers, were to be sacred unto the Lord. It was the sabbath sun, which first unfolded the landscape of a finished universe to his survey. It was the sabbath atmosphere which first wafted the incense of his morning praises to the throne of the eternal King. It was the sabbath rest which gave him the first symbolical intimation of that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

All this appears to be obviously involved in the phraseology applied to the seventh day ; for it is said that God rested on the seventh day from all his works, which He had made, and that God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, That the expressions of blessing and sanctifying here employed convey the idea of some peculiar sacredness being attached to this day beyond the other days of the week, will, I conceive, be denied by none : and that this act of consecration took place at the very close of creation is equally apparent. And if this be the case, it establishes the question that the appointment of one day in seven to be kept holy, and to be devoted to spiritual purposes, was not an exclusive characteristic of the Jewish dispensation. It was instituted many hundred years before that economy was called into existence, nor is there a single intimation contained in scripture

that it was intended only to serve a temporary purpose, and that after this object had been attained it was to cease any longer to be in force. The ordinance, in fact, with respect to its whole spirit and substance, is coeval with the world itself and with man, on whose observance it was enjoined. The bare act of God's resting on the Sabbath day, seemed obviously to suggest that it was to be always kept as a day of complete exemption from the employments of life and to be pre-eminently devoted to spiritual and divine occupations. But Jehovah not only rested on that day, but He also blessed it and sanctified it. He appointed and pronounced it to be a day of special favour and grace from Himself—a day, which would be a source of abundant blessing to those, who would wait upon Him—a day, which his people in all ages should deem a delight—the holy of the Lord—honorable and calculated to honor Him—a day, in which the whole family of the redeemed would be privileged to be glad and to rejoice. He also sanctified it—He set it apart for sacred purposes—He ordained it for the specific object of being employed in his immediate service—in the performance of the various duties of worship and homage—of adoration, prayer and praise. He marked it out from among the other days of the week as that, which should peculiarly belong unto Him in commemoration of the great work which He had achieved and in furtherance of the various interests of holiness, piety and devotion throughout every future age in every condition of the world, and under every economy of religion. On this ground alone—that of the original appointment of the Sabbath in the

time of man's innocence, independently of all reference to any particular dispensation, the obligation of the Sabbath would seem to me unquestionable and decisive. That we have no distinct account of the sanctification of the day in the brief epitome which has been handed down to us of the history of the patriarchal times affords no valid objection against its authority, because there is no evidence whatever that the servants of God in that remote period did not observe the Sabbath; and even if at any particular era the knowledge of the ordinance was altogether lost, it would be no proof that it was not originally instituted, or that it is not absolutely and imperatively binding, whenever that knowledge is possessed. Indeed wherever the Sabbath is either mentioned or enforced in scripture, it is always spoken of as an institution well known and universally recognized as a duty and not as a new appointment, which was then for the first time proposed. And it doubtless adds no ordinary force to the obligation of this holy day, that wherever the worship of the true God or a revelation of his will hath prevailed, there the due observance of the Sabbath has been a standing maxim of conduct.

The obligation of this holy day may be further argued from the peculiar *Solemnity*, with which the sanctification of it is enjoined in the law of the ten commandments. It has been already stated that the injunctions of the Decalogue collectively considered are a brief and condensed expression of the will of God in its bearing upon the character and conduct of mankind in every age of the world. They are a developement of the great principles of

moral purity and rectitude drawn out under the several heads of our duty towards God and towards our neighbour, and adapted to every condition of our earthly existence. It is therefore not without paramount necessity—it is not without the most express and unequivocal declaration of the divine will that we can venture to set aside any one of these requisitions—that we can safely undertake to repeal any article of that code, which was transcribed from the living tablet of the eternal mind by the finger of the Lawgiver himself into the two tables of stone. This is that law of holiness and truth and everlasting rectitude, which Christ came not into the world to destroy, but to establish, not to abrogate but to fulfil, not to degrade from its lofty sphere as representative of all that is pure and just in the character of Jehovah, and as the authoritative regulator of human conduct, but to magnify and make honorable, by an undeviating compliance with its demands, and by inspiring new motives for an unreserved obedience to its dictates. And it is in the very centre of this pandect of divine institutions, it is on the first table of this succinct, and comprehensive record of human duty, that the law of the sabbath is inscribed—inscribed too with a fulness of detail and an urgency of enforcement surpassing what is observable in any other of the ten commandments.

It is not merely however on the ground of the perpetual force, and the inviolable sanctity of the ten commandments, that we argue the continued obligation of the sabbath as enjoined in that summary of duty. The very phraseology—the very mode of expression there employed, appears to me

to indicate beyond a doubt that the observance of a Sabbath was not then first enjoined, but that it was nothing more than a revival of an ordinance which was divine and authoritative in its origin, but had now fallen into a state of comparative oblivion and neglect. There is not the least symptom, not the slightest hint that an institution so remarkable as that of setting apart every seventh day from all ordinary occupations—from all earthly pursuits was now for the first time to be established. The first clause of the injunction—remember the Sabbath day—is not merely intensive as designed to impress the mind with a sense of the paramount importance of this command, and of the danger of neglecting it, but it also appears to be indicative of the fact that the observance now so forcibly urged, was only a restoration of what had before been instituted—a reminiscence of what in the absence of written records, and amidst the prevalence of almost universal idolatry and impiety and vice had fallen into grievous neglect, if not utter forgetfulness and desuetude. The season assigned for the institution is equally confirmatory of the same view. It is stated to be on the ground that in six days God created the heaven and the earth and rested on the seventh day, and therefore that God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. Now in estimating the object and force of a law it is a maxim that it should be at least coextensive with its reasons. And if the fact of Jehovah's having rested on the seventh day after the completion of the works of creation be here assigned as the primary and immediate occasion of the sanctification of the Sabbath, it is obvious that the same cause

had existed from the beginning of the world, and therefore, independently of all other evidence, it might have been fairly assumed, that the law had been in force from the beginning. Whatever observance is instituted in commemoration of any particular event, unless there be some overwhelming reason to the contrary, must undoubtedly be considered as dating with the actual occurrence of that event. The conclusion therefore unquestionably is that the law of the Sabbath as delivered on mount Sinai, however binding and immutable in itself, was not that, which first established the ordinance, but only embodied in the form of a direct and most urgent and impressive injunction that which had been instituted from the beginning and was about to continue to the end. And hence Nehemiah, in enumerating the statutes and commandments, which God gave unto his people by his servant Moses, speaks of his having made known unto them his holy Sabbath—obviously implying that the ordinance had before existed as an appointment of Jehovah, and that the law of Sinai was only a public and authoritative promulgation of what had now become generally unknown.

I have dwelt upon this part of the subject somewhat more fully, because if it be once made apparent that a sabbath had been enjoined from the seventh day of creation; and that the law of Moses was only a republication of the original edict, the allegation of its having been abrogated, as part of the Jewish economy, is at once removed, and the institution forces itself on the judgment as an essential accompaniment of true religion throughout the whole history of the church under every suc-

cessive dispensation. When indeed we consider the terms of solemn and peremptory injunction, in which the duty of sanctifying the Sabbath is conveyed and enforced—when we bear in mind the overwhelming importance attached to it throughout the whole of the old testament—when we recollect the awful judgments, which are so frequently denounced against those, who are guilty of its violation, and the blessings, which are so liberally promised to those, by whom it is duly observed—when we hear Nehemiah remonstrating with the nobles of Judah because they brought wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath, and Isaiah repeatedly pronouncing him blessed, who keepeth the Sabbath, when we take all these circumstances into consideration coupled with the absence of the slightest intimation from the new testament that under the gospel the ordinance would cease to be in force, it is impossible, I conceive, to escape the conclusion that the Sabbath combining with its former objects the additional design of commemorating the Saviour's resurrection, is as obligatory upon us at this moment; as it was upon the Jews when the two tables of stone were deposited in the ark of the covenant. Let us remember therefore, the sabbath day to keep it holy—remember the antiquity of its institution and the perpetuity of its obligation. Let us remember the important objects it was designed to answer—remember the glorious and mighty events it was particularly intended to commemorate. Let us remember the strict and unbending rigor of its demands, the guilt attendant on its violation, and the privileges connected with its suitable and conscientious observance. Let us

remember that it is the institution of all others, of which the neglect is most general ; and in too many instances the consequences of that neglect are most fatal.

But once more the obligation of the Sabbath may be argued from the *Constancy* of its observance, wherever true religion has flourished and the knowledge of the character, the will and the attributes of Jehovah has prevailed. We have already traced the sabbath to its original institution at the consecration of the vast temple of nature to the glory and service of its Creator. We have viewed it as rising, after a temporary eclipse, with increased splendour upon mount Sinai, and embodying its demands in characters of light and of imperishable duration upon the first table of the covenant. We have seen its observance enforced on every page of the old testament scriptures with a minuteness of detail—with an awfulness of denunciation—with an earnestness of appeal and with an exuberant richness of promise, which give it a commanding and irresistible claim upon our best and most conscientious regards. Travelling on with the progress of ecclesiastical history to the establishment of the christian dispensation, which superseded the whole mass of the multifarious rites and ceremonies of the Jewish economy, we find that the seventh day, though altered from the former in adaptation to the Saviour's resurrection, was still in force, and was a day uniformly employed for divine worship and other spiritual purposes. The Lord's day or the first day of the week, as equivalent to the ancient sabbath, is continually mentioned as having been the season of some act

of homage or religious performance. It was on the first day of the week that Paul preached to the disciples at Troas, who had come together according to custom for the purpose of breaking bread. It is on the first day of the week, as being the day on which the members of the christian church assembled for the discharge of the various functions of divine worship, that the same eminent apostle commands the Corinthians to lay by them in store for the purpose of relieving their poorer brethren. And it was on the Lord's day, thus denominated in obvious reference to the Saviour's resurrection from the dead, and identical with the Christian Sabbath, that St. John was favored with those sublime and prophetic visions, which are recorded in the book of Revelation. It was while he was absorbed in spiritual contemplation on the day peculiarly appropriated to that and other congenial exercises, that the mystic scroll of futurity was unfolded to his view, on which were inscribed in symbolic characters the progressive destinies of the church, as long as there shall be a church upon earth. Taking their precedent from apostolic authority and example the primitive Christians, so far as we are aware, universally adopted the same practice, and it has flown down in uninterrupted succession, with such exceptions as temporary ignorance, idolatry or superstition might occasion, through a period of eighteen centuries until the present hour. However the sabbath may have been neglected through indifference or profaned through the overflowing iniquity and ungodliness of some of the darker epochs of the history of the christian church, it does not appear that there

was ever any systematic and combined attempt among those who professed to receive the christian revelation, to impugn the authority or to abrogate the observance of the day. The universality of such an observance, or at least of such a recognition of duty carried down from the primitive era, and spread over every section of the christian world, amidst all the diversity of discretionary rites and institutions, must be acknowledged to carry no ordinary weight in support of the absolute and unrepealed obligation of the ordinance. Nor does the absence of any direct injunction upon the subject from the pages of the christian scriptures warrant any other conclusion than that the ordinance was so well known and so fully recognized among the believers, as entirely to supersede the necessity of such commands. Here incidental references afford, if possible, a stronger evidence than positive directions.

Another fact of a general nature, from which in conjunction with more direct and unequivocal proofs, the obligation of the sabbath may be argued, is its remarkable adaptation to the character and capabilities of man under every dispensation of religion, and in every condition of society. Viewing the sabbath as a great moral ordinance of the supreme governor of the world, and designed to be coextensive in its bearing and obligation with the present system, it is important to survey it in its relation to the whole order of things, and to the peculiar nature and requirements of man. And contemplated in this light it may be fairly affirmed that the sabbath is a most wise and beneficent institution. Even those who have denied or doubted

its obligation, as binding upon christians, readily acknowledge its expediency, and even the necessity of some similar appointment for the various purposes it was designed to answer.⁽¹⁰⁾ It seems to mark out with the most consummate wisdom that precise portion of time for the several duties of religion, which the laws of nature and the physical as well as moral necessities of man combine in pointing out as practicable and proper. One day in seven entirely devoted to the service of God is perfectly compatible with a due and adequate attention to all the ordinary occupations of life, while at the same time it appears to be absolutely necessary to the maintenance of the requisite influence of religion in the soul. It was indeed remarked by an illustrious English Judge, the learned and devout Sir Mathew Hale, as the result of long observation and experience, "that he found his secular affairs prosper in the subsequent week just in proportion as he had been faithful and conscientious in devoting the sabbath to the service of God." So grievously mistaken are those persons, who allow themselves to think and act upon the notion, that they are really obliged to violate the sabbath in the pursuit of their worldly callings.

Finally we argue, on grounds of general analogy and presumptive evidence, the obligation of the sabbath from its delightful *Congentiality* to the feelings of all the faithful servants of God in every age of the world. By such persons this holy day has been always regarded as one of their best and highest privileges—as one of the noblest institutions—one of the choicest gifts of God to man. It has been ever a day of joy and gladness to their

souls. They have always called it a delight, and have deemed it honorable above all other days. Instead of regarding it with a feeling of indescribable tedium and weariness, which is characteristic of the ungodly, they have found it a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. By them the return of the sabbath has been hailed as an angel visit—reviving, exhilarating and strengthening. The periodical recurrence of this day marks the successive stages of their pilgrimage—the ascending steps of that mystic ladder, by which they climb from earth to heaven. It exhibits at short intervals so many fountains of consolation—so many spots of green pasture, where the soul may be comforted and replenished, while it prosecutes its toilsome journey through the waste howling wilderness—through the scorched and arid soil of this sinful and desolate world.

In the retrospect of the past the sabbath is associated with events in the highest degree interesting and important, and frequently calls up memories, which pass over the mind, like the shadow of a cloud on a hot summer's day, with a soothing and tranquillizing effect. In many instances it was the day, in the language of allegorical representation, of the soul's espousals unto Christ, and at every return was characterized by some fresh token of his love—some renewed manifestation of his faithfulness and truth. Oft does the eye look backward to some favoured season in the course of revolving sabbaths, in which the rock of the heart was struck by the rod of the divine word, and the waters of repentance gushed forth—when the manna of spiritual refreshment and support was

poured down in rich and copious supplies—when the vows of the covenant were plighted at the altar through the medium of their symbolic emblems with a joy bordering upon rapture—when faith and hope and love, blending their varied hues upon the cloud of the divine promise, formed an arch of glowing anticipation and delight, which seemed to compass the very heavens within its embrace. Where then is the christian, that would willingly give up his sabbath; rather would he relinquish every other day with all its gains and gratifications. To him this day of God is better than a thousand. To remind him of its obligation is scarcely necessary. It is sealed to him with highest sanction in the inestimable blessings and consolations, with which it is associated. It is inscribed in characters deep, vivid and indelible upon the tables of his own heart. And it cannot be that the voice of the spirit thus speaking in the soul of the believer, should not be a faithful echo of that, which issues in louder and more definite accents from the living oracle of his word.

Such are some of the leading grounds, upon which the obligation of the christian sabbath appears immoveably to rest. We have argued the perpetuity of its claims from the antiquity of its institution, as being coeval with creation itself—from the peculiar solemnity, with which it is enjoined in the first table of the law, associated with the most urgent and reiterated appeals in its behalf throughout the old testament scriptures—from the constancy of its observance, wherever true religion has prevailed and flourished—from its remarkable adaptation to the nature and character of man under

every dispensation of religion and in every condition of society, and lastly from its delightful congeniality to the feelings of all the people of God. If these reasons be satisfactory and convincing, then let us at once enter upon the strict practical recognition of the obligation of this holy day. Let us yield it entirely and unreservedly to the service of God in its various forms of duty and privilege. Once let us realize the blessedness attending its due and devotional observance, and we shall need no further arguments. We shall rejoice in it as a pledge and a symbol of that rest, which remaineth for the people of God.

CHAPTER III.

The Peculiar and Appropriate Duties of the Sabbath.

No written record, no general enactment, however comprehensive, can distinctly specify the duty of man in all its minute and subordinate details. Positive laws can only embody the great principles and exhibit in broad outline the rules of life and conduct. It is impossible that they should at the same time be applicable to man, in the universality of his earthly existence, and amidst all the varieties and complexities of the present scene of things, and descend into all the particulars arising out of the every day transactions of society. To secure the latter object there must have been enacted almost as many laws as the human beings, who at successive periods have passed, and are yet to pass over the stage of life ; and every general command must have been ramified into a multiplicity of prohibitions and directions as numerous as the actions, and as various as the habits and conditions of the individuals of mankind. Such minuteness of injunction, for any practical purpose, is obviously

neither necessary nor possible. All that is requisite or expedient in a great rule of government, designed for universal observance, is that the line of demarcation be traced with sufficient clearness and distinctness of coloring, to enable a conscientious inquirer, to discover the will of the Lawgiver and his own correspondent obligation.

In a book, like the bible, designed for the use, not of one age or nation—not of one exclusive dispensation or profession of religion, but of all men in all ages and under all diversities of outward character and condition—a book containing within comparatively so small a compass the whole counsel of God, in relation to his human creatures, it was to be expected that direct injunctions respecting many departments of conduct should be of a very general nature, and that many important peculiarities should be left to necessary inference from the great fundamental requisition. The command to renounce the world, for example, is confessedly expressed in language of palpable and unquestionable implication, rather than in terms of definite and specific injunction. Yet no one, who is unfeignedly desirous of knowing and practising the will of God, in reference to this point, can be greatly at a loss in ascertaining his duty or doubt its supreme importance. The same remark is equally applicable to the law, which directs children to honor and obey their parents, and to many other requirements, which are conveyed in the broad form of preceptive generalities, but leave the question of the extent, to which they are intended to be enforced, and of the circumstances, under which they are to be brought to bear upon the character

and conduct to be decided by other incidental declarations, and by the collective import of those scriptural statements, which are found to illustrate the subject. In the application of such important directories to the regulation of the prevailing habits of life, something will undoubtedly depend upon circumstances, to be estimated by the combined exercise of an enlightened understanding, and of a devout and willing heart. The great object is to catch, if I may so speak, the spirit of the law, or the institution, and to interpret its practical meaning by a direct and invariable reference to its primary purpose and design. As in the animal frame the form of every limb—the size and shape of every bone, and the position and arrangement of every joint or muscle have a direct relation to the wants, the instincts, and the habits of the being, to which they belong, so that from a view of a minute extremity of almost any living creature, the comparative anatomist can tell the peculiar character of the whole body and the very element, in which it is best calculated to dwell—as in works of architecture, the several compartments of a building must be in keeping with the general style, in which it is erected, and are correct and congruous in proportion as they maintain a strict accordance with the original plan; so in the endeavour to point out the line of conduct, which may best comport with the divine command we must firmly keep in view the great and leading objects, which the law or the institution was designed to answer. This is the great principle of scriptural interpretation; this is the key by which we may unlock the mystery, in which, in some instances, its real significancy or its

practical bearing is involved. This, in addition to the great palpable demands, which stand out upon the very surface of the law, will bring into distinct and prominent exhibition a variety of lines, which were before but dimly seen. By this means the path of duty will become more clear and unequivocal, and less opportunity will be afforded to impiety and profaneness to violate the spirit of the law without incurring the charge of a direct infraction of the letter. The law of the sabbath indeed is propounded with a fulness of statement and illustrated with a variety of references and appeals, which almost preclude the possibility of mistaking the extent of its obligations, and the leading duties, which it enjoins. As however it is too obvious that there are many persons, who are far from practically appreciating the mode, in which it was doubtless intended that the sabbath should be observed, we shall now enter, in pursuance of the plan already proposed, upon a consideration of the peculiar and appropriate Duties of the Sabbath. These we shall endeavour briefly to point out under a twofold aspect, negative and positive. We shall first shew what habits, occupations and pursuits ought to be laid aside as contrary to the letter or as opposed to the spirit of this holy institution, and then mention a few of those great duties, which are either absolutely required or innocently allowed to be performed on this day.

In illustration of the first of these general points I would observe that all such secular business as may be suitably and adequately pursued on other days should be relinquished on this day. This observation indeed is expressive of a truth so clear

and unquestionable—so fully borne out by every page of scripture and so naturally springing out of the very object and design of the sabbath ordinance that as a vague and abstract proposition few would think of denying it. No one, who can appreciate the design and acknowledges the obligation of the sabbath at all would hesitate for a moment in conceding that it was intended to be a day of rest from the ordinary pursuits of life, and that to devote it to the regular prosecution of worldly employ is a palpable infraction of a divine command. It is not often indeed that the profanation of the day is carried to this entire length—that the whole period of its duration is so completely replenished with a succession of worldly occupations as to obliterate all distinction between it and other days. In some departments of life—in some lines of business this is unquestionably the case. To those, who occupy these conditions, whether of labour or of professional routine, a sabbath day, in the proper sense of the expression, is a change, which is never allowed to break in, with a refreshing and exhilarating effect, upon the galling and debasing monotony of their course—a sunshine, which never throws its radiance across their path—a luxury, of which through impiety, avarice or oppression they know not what it is to partake. I would not affirm indeed that there may not be occasionally processes of labour, or duties of a professional character, which it is necessary to carry on without intermission, and the continuance of which, so long as the palpable and unquestionable necessity remains, does not therefore encroach upon the spirit and design of the sabbatical institution. But such cir-

cumstances and conjunctures are rare, and by judicious arrangement combined with sincere desires and vigorous efforts may for the most part without any material inconvenience be obviated.

Leaving however such occupations as fall within the range of absolute necessity, out of the limits of our present discussion, there is still a mass of multifarious secular engagements, which though carried on with open and unblushing violation of the ordinance and of the civil enactments, by which the observance of it is enjoined, are really as needless in themselves as they are at variance with the whole spirit and design of the appointment—engagements, which spread with a dark and deep and widening accumulation of guilt over the scenery of sabbath habits and lour with portentous gloom over the horizon of our future prospects. The extent, to which the holy day of God is desecrated, by being diverted from its legitimate object and design, and employed for purposes of worldly convenience or advantage is truly awful and appalling. If we could take the station of the angel in the sun, and accompany that glorious luminary in his career from the eastern to the western shores of our island, what a contrast would the whole aspect of society present to the scene, which would be realized, if the directions of scripture in general, or the strict prohibitions of the fourth commandment were carried into full effect—the former enjoining us to turn away our foot from the sabbath, as from holy and consecrated ground, and the latter forbidding any manner of work to be done, by ourselves or those who are under our control, on that sacred day! In many instances the

temple of Jehovah would be found deserted as the haunt of an obsolete superstition, and the shrines of Mammon crowded with busy, active and devoted worshippers. But it is not necessary to make such a circuit as we have supposed, to travel as pilgrims of the sun, over the whole length of our land in order to witness this scene of grievous and unseemly profanation. We need only take our stand at the centre, or direct our course through any one of the broad streets of our larger towns, in order to see worldly business carrying on with the same activity, if not with the same openness as on other days! I am very far from laying the whole blame of this most injurious practice upon the individuals, in many cases highly respectable and well disposed, who dispense their commodities to those who beset their doors and demand to be supplied. The latter assuredly bear their full share of the guilt, and to say the least, are deeply involved in the charge of being partakers of other men's sins. If there were no buyers, it is obvious that there could be no sellers. I would however trace the evil still farther. It arises doubtless in a great measure from a practice which cannot be too earnestly deprecated and too strongly censured, that of paying the wages of labour at so late an hour on the evening of the last day of the week, as to preclude the possibility, at least, without extreme inconvenience, of procuring the necessary supply of the several articles of consumption until the morning of the sabbath. This habit, for the most part, perfectly needless and gratuitous in itself, places both the other parties, the buyer and the seller, if they are in any degree influenced by sound

christian principle, in a most cruel and embarrassing situation. It in a manner obliges them to offend God and to wound their own consciences—to do violence to their better feelings and absent themselves from the ordinances of religion. It has a direct tendency to harden their hearts—to secularize their whole character and gradually to extinguish every spark of the fear and love of God, which may have once been kindled in their minds. It is recorded of Jeroboam as a distinguishing characteristic of his profane and impious reign that he *made* Israel to sin ; and I know not how the individuals, who follow the practice, to which I have just alluded, can be exempted from the charge of making their dependents to sin—how they can escape the tremendous woe denounced against those, by whom offences come.

It is not however the practice of buying and selling only, though this appears to be the most open, and extensively prevalent, which ought to be relinquished as utterly inconsistent with the genuine character and purposes of the sabbath. The system of travelling by public conveyances, on objects of business, or mere temporary convenience, the habit of journeying from town to country, and the reverse, with the view of extending the range, or gathering in the produce of trade and commerce, the more retired occupations of balancing accounts, or answering the demands of epistolary correspondence exclusively connected with secular interests and pursuits, are equally to be deprecated as palpable encroachments upon the sanctity and insurmountable barriers against the extension of spirit and practical influence of the day. To talk

of the necessity of such habits, except in some most extraordinary cases is absurd. Let him, who alledges such an excuse, snatch a few additional hours from the rest, or the indulgence of other days, and he will without difficulty find time for the undisturbed repose and the more sublime and delightful enjoyment of the appointed day of rest.

On the negative side of the question before us, I would remark, that all such *recreations, amusements, associations*, and intellectual evercises as are unsuitable to the spirit and design, and interfere with the proper duties of the day, ought to be entirely laid aside. If it be an evil, as it unquestionably is, to employ the sabbath in the prosecution of labours which are innocent and useful in themselves, and are wrong only as pursued at an improper season, it is assuredly a much greater evil to devote it to habits, which are allowable only within due limits at any time, and at the best, in many instances, are but of questionable propriety. Every institution is liable to perversion and abuse, and thus the sabbath itself, however gracious, noble and exalted in design, and however salutary in its legitimate tendency, yet from the very leisure, which it affords—from the season of vacuity and exemption which it brings round every seventh day, has doubtless in too many instances been the innocent occasion of originating the most atrocious crimes, and of cherishing habits of indolence, depravity and vice. Where persons, who are employed in some department of labour, science or art, find that they have one seventh of their time, entirely on their own hands, and are not disposed to lay it out in the discharge of the appointed du-

ties, and in the fruition of the pure and legitimate pleasures of the day, they generally have recourse to some method of killing it. According to their peculiar taste, character and circumstances, they plunge in reckless and degrading dissipation, lounge in vacant indolence, roam with idle gaze, assemble in convivial parties beneath some public or private roof, or they read and discuss the novelties and occurrences of the last week as recorded on the page of some periodical journal; and thus instead of turning away their foot from the sabbath as an object of holy and reverential awe they trample upon it with a bold and heedless levity, as if it had been made for the express purpose of affording them an opportunity of lavishing upon it all the wantonness of their merriment.

I am not pleading for moroseness. I am not advocating or recommending what may be termed a puritanic rigor in the observance of an institution, which was intended to be a season of calm, refreshing and elevated enjoyment. I am not assuming that a grave and demure aspect on this or any other day is the invariable index of a pure and devout heart. The generous freedom, the sublime spirituality of the Christian dispensation has disengaged the sabbath from every thing which could be considered as a bondage to ceremonial rites and burdensome restrictions. But that the habits of sportive and inconsiderate levity, which so extensively prevail among us—that the practice of assembling together in the fields, as is frequently the case, with young persons, for the purpose of engaging in various games and pastimes—that to sally out on parties of pleasure, even at the very hour that the

congregation is collecting together for the worship of God—that to meet in numerous and crowded associations around the convivial board, as is too often the case in the upper departments of society—that to frequent those haunts of intemperance, and excess, which I fear have too much multiplied among us to answer any useful and laudable end, for the purpose of vain and trifling, if not directly corrupt communication, or for the perusal of those public prints which are seldom free from some tincture of scandal, blasphemy or outrage—that such habits are unsuitable to the character, and diametrically opposed to the whole spirit and tendency of the sabbath, will, I conceive, be conceded by every person of sober and reflecting mind : and if such be their nature, there can be no question that they ought to be at once and entirely relinquished. The words of the prophet as prohibiting us from doing our own ways, from finding our own pleasure, and even from speaking our own words on a day, which has been set apart for nobler occupations, and more exalted delights, are so plain and decisive in the line of demarcation, which they draw around the inviolable sanctity of the sabbath, that he who runs cannot fail to mark it.

The abandonment of such habits as have been mentioned however, whether they be those of business or pleasure, whether of indolence or labour, whether of amusement or gain, forms but a part of the obligations and affords only a negative view of the duties of this holy day. The sabbath, though a day of rest, was never intended to be a day of complete vacancy ; for the inevitable consequence would be, that it would speedily degenerate, like

those, with which the Romish calendar is so thickly studded, into a season of universal levity and dissipation. Man is a being, which cannot be safely or advantageously trusted with unoccupied time. When therefore we have removed those engagements and diversions, which are either distinctly forbidden, or are palpably inappropriate to the sacred hours of the sabbath, it is doubtless incumbent upon us to point out the occupations and enjoyments, in which the day may be most suitably and usefully employed. It is through the neglect, or the want of a taste and a capacity for the delightful employments and the legitimate duties of the seventh day, that so many persons find it a day of heaviness and insipidity, when they are prevented from devoting it to some active pursuit of business or pleasure—that to them it is a page in the book of life, unfolding itself at regular intervals, and inscribed with mystic characters, in which they discover no meaning and feel no interest; and therefore they contrive to fill it up with a grotesque and spurious medley of unhallowed device.

To obviate such evil we observe that one of the first duties, as well as one of the purest enjoyments of the sabbath, is the *Cultivation* of a devotional spirit, through the medium of that retirement from the tumultuous scenes of life, and of that habit of holy and undisturbed meditation upon spiritual and eternal things, for which the sabbath affords so delightful an opportunity. Amidst the incessant din of worldly avocations and pursuits, the still voice of the divine Spirit poured into the ear of the soul, can be but very partially and indistinctly heard. The harmony of the spheres is

liable to be drowned by the louder dissonance of earthly tumults and commotions. Exposed to the unhealthy atmosphere of a sinful and carnal world, and subject to the varied collisions of its temptations, cares and interests, the principle of grace and holiness in the soul is liable to be enfeebled and overborne by the hostile elements, with which it has to contend. To meet this dangerous exigency of our condition, the sabbath has been wisely and most graciously appointed. On this blessed day we have an opportunity of sequestering ourselves for a while from the pressing demands of time and sense—of retiring into the secluded sanctuary of our own souls, where we may commune with our own hearts and be still, where we may detect with the eye of faith, in the light of the divine word, the illusive vanities of the world—where we may hold close and intimate converse with death, with the judgment, and with the awful eternity, which is before us—where above all we may have fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ. It is at such moments of high and sacred communion with the Father of our spirits, that religion appears to be indeed a reality, that the care of the soul is seen to be the one thing needful, that the earth and its engrossing vanities are found to dwindle into a point, and eternity to rise into a scene of vivid and impressive and overpowering importance, which for the while fills the mind with surprise, that it should deem any other object worth a thought, or deserving of a moment's anxiety. To devote some portion of the sabbath, such a portion as may be spared from active duty to these soothing and elevating contemplations, is unquestiona-

bly required of every man, who knows what it is to think. Such a habit of calm and enlightened meditation has a direct and most powerful tendency to foster a devotional spirit, to invigorate every sound principle, to confirm every holy resolution, and to kindle into higher ardour every pure and exalted affection of the soul.

But with the exercise of private meditation, the public worship of God, and the celebration of the appointed ordinances of his house must be invariably combined. These institutions of divine authority and arrangement come as a delightful relief to the more retired and solitary duties of the sabbath. They bear an evident impress of the wisdom and goodness of Him, by whom they were ordained, If it be our duty, at proper seasons to retire into our own closets, to hold intercourse with God in secret, it is still more palpably and emphatically our duty, as it is more distinctly and specifically enjoined, to go forth with his people, and to engage in those ostensible acts of homage and adoration, to which his blessing stands peculiarly pledged. For the celebration of the worship of Jehovah in his house, and in company with the congregation of his people, the sabbath is not less obviously adapted than it was doubtless originally intended. To those, who avail themselves regularly, and as frequently as circumstances permit, of this delightful opportunity of drawing near unto God, and enter with intelligence and affection into the spirit of the several services of the day, there is little danger that it should hang heavy as a burden, which they will be anxious to shake off, by plunging into some scene of more stirring and

pleasurable occupation. By them the body of the day will thus be employed in the immediate worship of God, and as they pass the threshold of his sanctuary, they will be ready to exclaim from their own experience of its privileges—"This is none other than the house of God—this is the gate of heaven." On some occasions, Jehovah opens his banqueting house, and admits them into a participation of richer pleasures and more exhilarating delights. He spreads his table before them. He invites them to draw near with faith, and to receive for their comfort and refreshment, the manna of their Redeemer's flesh, and the wine of his atoning blood, as a pledge and a foretaste of that celestial feast, at which they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the everlasting kingdom of their Father. With such opportunities of intercourse with God in private, and of joining the multitude of his worshippers in the varied privileges and exercises of his house, in listening to the declarations of his word—that word, which hath brought nobler and brighter discoveries to view, than the ken of science and philosophy hath ever penetrated; in pouring forth the accents of supplication at his throne, and in chanting the melody of his praise; in attending to the instructions of his messengers, and in celebrating the dying love of his Son—with such a multiplicity of resources, and such a succession of interesting engagements, who can complain that the sabbath is a day of tedium and weariness, with which they know not what to do?

Besides however the retired occupations of the closet, the exercises of domestic worship and the public duties of the sabbath, there are other em-

ployments of a most useful and beneficial character, which may well be allowed to fill up such vacant spaces as may intervene between acts of more direct and imperative obligation. Among these subordinate duties of the sabbath, the pursuit of religious knowledge by the diligent perusal of the Bible, and of other books of a spiritual and devotional character, and the communication of that knowledge to the young, the thoughtless and the ignorant, by means of sunday schools, and institutions of a similar description must undoubtedly be considered as occupying a prominent place. Nothing is more perfectly accordant with the whole design, and the genuine spirit of this day, than the endeavour to dispel the gloom of ignorance—to extend the light of truth to instruct the poorer and less educated members of the community in the great principles of the everlasting Gospel—to enlighten the blind, to strengthen the weak, to establish the wavering, to comfort the dejected, and to break that fatal spell, by which sinners are led blindfold to perdition. Nothing can be better calculated to carry into effect the great purpose of the institution, than to employ it in attempting to enlarge by every just and legitimate means the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom.

I finally observe, that such parts of the sabbath as may without inconvenience be spared from the immediate worship of God, and engagements of a more directly spiritual character, may be innocently, advantageously and laudably employed in such works of charity and brotherly love, as may urge a more pressing claim upon the attention. We have the authority and example of the Saviour himself in

proof that acts of kindness, beneficence and compassion are not unlawful on the sabbath day. And if there had been a scantiness of demand from other sources, if the hours of the Lord's day were found to roll tardily along, through the want of adequate employment, the channel which we have now opened, would alone be sufficient to convey them in a most useful, salutary and honorable direction. Where there are sick to be visited, where there are poor to be relieved, and destitute to be supplied ; where there are sufferers to be cheered by the gentle voice of sympathy, and widows and orphans to be comforted in their affliction, let no one allege, in excuse for his desecrating the holy day of God, that he is at a loss for more appropriate modes of disposing of its supernumerary hours. If the sabbath was as long as the sabbath of weeks, or extended over the length of the jubilee, nay if its hours were as long as so many years, it would still be infinitely too short to realize the manifold objects, to which it may be legitimately devoted.

Such appears to be the allowed and appropriate mode, both as it relates to negative and affirmative duties, in which the Christian sabbath is to be observed. It is to be guarded with the most scrupulous and conscientious exactness, from the encroachments of secularity, whether in the form of business or pleasure : it is to be devoted entirely and unreservedly to the glory of God, and to the promotion of the good of man : it is to be one unbroken series of delightful and elevating engagements directed to these objects, gradually weaning the soul from the affairs of time and sense, and raising the tone of the mind and character to a

closer approximation to that which prevails among the sons of light and glory above. Let our sabbaths be thus observed, and we shall be conscious of no other feeling than that of regret, that they so speedily pass away, and of ardent anticipation of that sabbath without end, which awaits us beyond the grave.

CHAPTER IV.

The Benefits attendant on a due Observance of the Sabbath.

WHEN Jehovah conveys an expression of his will, in the form of a positive injunction, it seldom happens that he does not at the same time afford some intimation of the advantages connected with it. His precepts and promises indeed, when reduced to their first principles, and surveyed in all their bearings, will be found invariably to involve each other. When He commands, whether the blessing attendant on cheerful and unreserved obedience be expressly specified or not, we may be assured that such will not be withheld. When He promises, on the other hand, it always involves certain conditions, the performance of which is indispensably required as preparatory to the reception of the favors, which are held forth. Blessings of the most stupendous magnitude are thus made entirely to depend upon a compliance with preliminary demands. Whatever God requires of his people as a duty never fails, when practically recognized, to issue in a privilege. Whatever He graciously pledges Himself to do in their behalf assumes the

fact of their cordially acceding to the prescribed terms—terms, upon which alone He can consistently visit them in the exercise of his loving kindness and compassion. All the blessings of the christian covenant are dependent upon such conditions. The pardon of sin is necessarily associated with the duty of repentance. The justification of the soul through the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer is entirely founded upon the exercise of faith. The everlasting salvation of the soul—the consummation of the glorious work of redeeming grace and love is the result—not indeed in the way of merit or of mercenary acknowledgment, but in the way of a fixed and established connection, of a sincere and active fulfilment of the requisitions of the gospel.

Such is the gracious and beautiful economy of the divine government. Throughout its whole administration precepts and promises are connected together by the golden link of the conditional demand. The duty of strictly observing the sabbath is thus frequently exhibited in the form not of a direct command, but of an hypothetical supposition; and on that assumption is founded a promise of most copious and abundant blessings. “*If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath,*” saith the prophet Isaiah—if thou regard the institution with holy and reverential awe, if thou conscientiously abstain from the violation of it, by relinquishing thy ordinary pursuits and occupations, and by devoting its sacred hours to the various exercises of piety, “*then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord*”—then shall the observance of the institution become emphatically its own reward—then shall the favour

of heaven rest upon thee ; and thou shalt proceed rejoicing and exulting in thy course, until thou appear upon Mount Zion and in the city of the living God.

Such appears to be the general bearing of this emphatic declaration, and in accordance with this view we shall now enter upon a fuller and more distinct developement of the remaining and concluding department of the subject of the sabbath—the *Benefits* calculated to result from a due observance of the institution. We have already considered at some length the *Design*, with which it was originally appointed—the *Obligations*, by which it still continues to be in force, and the *Manner*, in which it is necessary that it should be observed. These general heads of remark we found to embrace most of those points, which are necessary to establish the grounds and to illustrate the practical bearing and application of this important institution. But it would not have been right nor expedient to leave the question at this stage of the investigation. It is not enough simply to maintain, and to inculcate a duty of this comprehensive character : it is not sufficient that we should mark out the lines of prohibitory injunction, by which it is designed to control and regulate the conduct, and to circumscribe the actions of men. It is incumbent on us to follow it out into its various consequences—to unfold its beneficial effects and to exhibit in brief outline the numerous advantages, connected with it. From this it will appear that the sabbath is not a groundless and a mere arbitrary appointment—that it is not an appendage of a transient dispensation—that it is not a creature of

human law—that it is not an old custom floating down upon the stream of time from an age of ignorance and superstition, which may be observed without benefit and neglected without loss or guilt. It will be seen that it originated in the most benevolent motives—that it was instituted by the most consummate wisdom—that it is pregnant, when duly observed, with innumerable and transcendent advantages, and that therefore it is not less our interest than it is our duty to turn away our foot from the sabbath. We do not indeed rest the obligations of the sabbath upon such grounds of expediency as we can point out. The authoritative force of the institution is based upon the positive command and the express enactment of Jehovah : and in tracing its advantages we can only notice those, which palpably stand forth to the view, or are pledged in the specific promise of the Most High. These may be contemplated under a two-fold aspect as they consist in an exemption from various forms of evil and as they are realized in direct and positive good.

Among the former class of benefits it is to be remarked, that a due observance of the sabbath day is the best security against the various temptations incident to habits of *Indolence* and ill-directed *Leisure*. We observed at an early stage in this discussion, that one of the objects of Jehovah, in the appointment of this day, was to afford men an opportunity of resting for a while from their usual labours and occupations, in order to engage with greater freedom of spirit, and greater concentration of thought and affection in the several duties of divine worship and service. When this

season of calm and delightful repose is employed for this exalted purpose, the effect is in the highest degree salutary and beneficial. The sabbath becomes then a memorial of nobler blessings, a foretaste of sublimer joys, a resting place in a journey, which conducts to happier scenes. But when its great and leading objects are completely overlooked, when its primary design as an institution established for the purpose of promoting the glory and worship of God, and the spiritual interests of man, is lost amidst those, which were merely secondary and subordinate; when it is regarded merely as a season of exemption from secular employment and a species of periodical jubilee, on which the ordinary obligations of duty and labour cease to restrain, then instead of a blessing, it is liable and indeed seldom fails to be perverted into an occasion of grievous and aggravated delinquency. That, which in the gracious purposes of heaven was intended to be a pure and salubrious fountain to cleanse the polluted, and to refresh the parched and weary, becomes a reservoir of turbid and unwholesome elements, which send forth a dense mass of pestilential effluvia, to defile and corrupt the air. It must be perfectly needless to state, while, this in many cases, is the unquestionable fact, how entirely it is the result of human depravity and perversion—how completely opposite is the effect, when the sabbath is suitably observed and the ordinance is directed to its just and legitimate objects. We have already shewn the absolute necessity of such an institution in the present circumstances of our nature, in order to the maintenance of the knowledge of God and of the influence of

religion in the world, and since it has been wisely and graciously established, our great object must be to avoid the evils, to which this abuse of it may incidentally give rise, and to secure the advantages which it is so eminently calculated to afford.

On a general survey of human impiety and depravity in some of their most noxious and revolting forms, it is impossible not to be aware that a very large proportion of these evils takes its immediate rise from the neglect, or the more palpable violation, of the sabbath. The mode, in which the process of depravation is carrying on, is as various as the age, the character, and the circumstances of individuals. You may sometimes trace it in the career of one, who commenced his course in iniquity as a boy, let loose from every salutary restraint, creating noisy disturbance in the vicinity of the church, instead of devoutly and solemnly joining in the services, which are conducted within its walls, or rambling through the church-yard, seeming to be no unapt resemblance of the wretched beings, which met the Saviour as they came out from among the tombs. As you accompany him in his farther progress you will find the sabbath invariably selected as his choice opportunity for carrying into execution every darker purpose of his reprobate and reckless mind. On the morning of that hallowed day, instead of the neatness and cleanliness of attire, which would intimate a readiness to meet his fellow worshippers in the house of God, and is no unfaithful index to the interior of the mind and character, you will see him issue forth from his dwelling, arrayed in the appropriate insignia of idleness and improvidence, and hastening

to some scene of profligate resort, to mingle with companions not deficient in the will or the ability to make him tenfold more a child of hell than themselves ; and it is well, if he does not eventually reach the climax of human guilt and ignominy in the perpetration of some deed of dishonesty or violence, which will forfeit his life or his liberty to the outraged dignity of his country's laws ; while he avows with his last breath that the season, at which he was first initiated into the mysteries of atrocious crime, was no other than the sabbath-day. You may witness a similar process of degeneracy in the case of a young female, trained up to no better habits by parental wisdom, authority and example, who spends the former part of the sabbath in endeavouring to adorn her person and flaunts away the remaining portion of it in gaudy finery, in the most public places of commerce, as if determined to banish to a secure distance every serious and considerate feeling, and bidding fair, unless preserved by a miracle of divine grace, to end her levity in a course of infamy and wretchedness, to which I scarcely dare to allude. You may observe the effects of the leisure and inactivity afforded by the sabbath institution in many milder forms—in the displays of vanity and shew—in the more eager pursuit of pleasure and dissipating amusement—in the thoughtless ramblings of the young during the whole or the greater part of the day—in the journeyings and convivialities of the rich—in the unedifying and often corrupting associations of those of a lower rank, and in the general indulgencies of this holy day, wherever the design of the ordinance is not duly appreciated and practically acknowledged.

Amidst such an array of temptations—temptations, which in some form or other, assail every human being, and from which few, if any, escape altogether unhurt, it is assuredly a matter of no trifling importance to be effectually guarded against their approach. Proportioned to the imminency of the danger, and the depth, and variety of the evils liable to be incurred is the value of the means, by which they may be securely obviated. And we may justly rank among advantages of the highest order, the habit of conduct, by which the character may be preserved from the deepest moral degradation, and the foulest stains of guilt. This may be confidently affirmed of the strict and conscientious observance of the sabbath. I know of no more availing method of maintaining the purity, the integrity, the sublime spirituality of the character, of preventing the streams of thought and affection from becoming stagnant and putrescent, or from rushing forth in torrents of vice and depravity over the whole extent of the conduct. The careful and devout observance of this holy day, will not only be a guard against evil, but it will also be productive of direct and positive good. The man who sanctifies the sabbath by regularly devoting it to the various duties connected with the worship of God, is surrounded by an atmosphere of comparative purity and health. Independently of the higher principles of religion, the fear and love of God, to the developement of which the sabbath is so eminently favourable and conducive, there is engendered in such a man a feeling of modest and becoming self-respect, a decency, a propriety, and an elegance of sentiment

and affection, which render him infinitely superior to those, who at every call of passion, at every assault of temptation, are ready to rush into crime, or to plunge into sin. If there was no other advantage connected with a sabbath duly observed than this general habit of mind, and the cast of character resulting from it, I should still maintain that its benefits were incalculably great. As a barrier set up against the inroads of temptation, as a means of filling up a space of time, which had been left vacant of employment, and would soon be inevitably replenished with the elements of corruption, I should regard it as a most powerful auxiliary to national virtue and individual happiness.

To the same class belongs another most important benefit connected with the due observance of the sabbath, that it is the most effectual *preservative* against being overwhelmed by the engrossing cares and interests of the present world. Who, that has made the attempt—who that is capable of appreciating the nature of this arduous conflict, has not felt the difficulty of the struggle? Who is not aware of the distracting influence of secular anxieties and pursuits, when they are allowed to take exclusive possession of the mind? Who knows not the intense continuity of emotion, with which the various enterprizes of gain, ambition and professional occupation are apt to harass and enthrall the breast? Who, that has been brought within the circle of its enchantment, has not felt the fascinations of worldly pleasure and amusement? These, in confederacy with the inherent tendencies and susceptibilities of corrupt nature

are the enemies which war against the soul. They press upon it from every side with a constancy and pertinacity of assault, with a variety and an amount of force, which, if it had been left exposed to their uninterrupted violence, would inevitably effect its destruction. The principles of religion, like the seed sown among thorns, or scattered by the wayside would either be choked by the multiplicity of cares, and trials, and vexations, or be dissipated by the levity and impetuosity of encroaching lusts and passions.

The sabbath was provided and appointed by divine wisdom—that wisdom, which well knew what was in man, to be a place of seclusion and retreat, to which the soul might betake itself every seventh day for the purpose of recruiting its strength, and of repairing its wasted energies after conflicting in unequal contest with the perturbations and disquietudes, the cares and interests, the pleasures and dissipations of the world. On this day a truce has been imposed by the high authority of heaven upon the more direct warfare which that great enemy in its various forms of business and pleasure carries on against the soul. It is a holy league stipulated in our favour for the express purpose of affording us convenient opportunity of carrying on, unmolested by the encroachments of worldly care or occupation, our intercourse with our Father, who is in heaven. And when the object of the institution is duly realised and appreciated, the effect is transcendently glorious and beneficial, and the end is fully accomplished. It is indeed difficult to estimate too highly the soothing and tranquillizing influence of a sabbath upon a

spirit, which has been worn in the service of the world during the preceding week, into comparative numbness and insensibility to the pure and delicate enjoyments of an exalted fellowship with God. It is delightful to contemplate it amidst the serenity of the surrounding atmosphere, composing its ruffled affections, and like the bird of the morning preparing to rise on its pinions, in order to meet in midway fellowship the hallowed choir above, and to pour forth its notes of praise and thanksgiving, while no jarring tumult of worldly business or delight intervenes to break their melody. On every seventh day the impetus of earthly and carnalizing pursuits thus receive a check, and their power becomes in some degree enfeebled. The course of this world, which is so apt to carry us along in its turbid and destructive movement, is broken at intervals; which affords us time to reflect upon the peril of our condition, and to contemplate the dreadful gulf to which it conducts. By the periodical cessation from other employments, which the sabbath brings round, we are impressively reminded, that there is another and a better world, that there are higher and weightier interests, that there are purer and more substantial joys than the present scene affords, that ere long time will be swallowed up in eternity, and that we shall be surrounded with realities of happiness, or woe which will render all sublunary sorrows and delights as insignificant as the bubbles upon the stream.

The benefits of the sabbath, when strictly and devoutly observed, are however not confined to the powerful influence which it exerts in obviating the various evils attendant on habits of indolence

and worldly occupation ; they are of a more direct and positive character. And among this latter class we may remark, that this sacred institution is calculated to be eminently beneficial in forming habits of general *Propriety*, *Regularity* and *Virtue*. That these habits of conduct are in themselves highly advantageous to individuals, as well as to the community at large, requires no proof. They are obviously the bonds of society and the purest and most copious sources of domestic peace and comfort. Their connection with the observance of the sabbath, and with the discharge of its appropriate duties, though not so palpable and apparent, is yet certain and unquestionable. A feeling of reverence and respect for the holy day of God, may be fairly asserted to be a moral principle of the most influential and practical character. It is a germ of thought and feeling pregnant with the most extensive and salutary results. It is a spring of action which has a powerful effect in controlling and regulating the movements of the whole machinery of the conduct. There is in fact, no external ordinance of religion, which experience shews to be so intimately connected with correspondent effects upon the general character, as that of the sabbath. Few habits are so truly symptomatic of the real state of the mind, as the mode in which it is habitually employed. Fix your eye upon any individual of your neighbourhood, or acquaintance in any department of life, who is remarkable for his conscientious regard for the sabbath, and for his regular and uniform attendance upon the public services of the sanctuary, and I am most exceedingly mistaken if you do not find him equally

distinguished, if not by the genuineness of his piety and the fervour of his devotion, at least by the decency, the industry and the rectitude of his general demeanour. Look around you on the other hand, and mark the man, who is noted for his desecration of the day, which is by pre-eminence "the holy of the Lord"—the man, who spends it in sleep, or in work, in travelling, or yawning, in drinking or gambling—the man who is rarely, if ever, found at his church, or his chapel, and still more infrequently at his Bible, or his devotions; and what are his prevailing habits during the other days of the week? Granted—that he is not very precise in the duties, which he owes to God; but is he more exact and conscientious in those, which immediately relate to man? Is it to him that you would look for a pattern of every social and domestic virtue, of honor, benevolence and integrity, as a man of property or professional engagement, of rectitude, veracity and assiduity as a tradesman, of industry and conscientiousness as a workman, of fidelity as a servant, of sobriety and diligence as the head or the subordinate member of a family, of kindness as a husband, of affection and prudence as a parent, or of dutifulness and obedience as a child? To look for such qualities in combination with gross sabbath profanation, and with habitual neglect and contempt of the appointed ordinances of the sanctuary, would obviously be to seek for light in darkness, virtue in vice, life in death. It is true indeed that pride, necessity, or self-interest may do much to cleanse the exterior of the character, and to restrain the grosser excesses of profligacy and indolence; but no means are more

effectual in raising the general standard of morality, and in removing the deformities of individual conduct, than the enlightened observance of the sabbath. I should deem it a most important step in advance therefore in parochial reformation, as a component part of national virtue, if every individual could be persuaded to pay a decent respect to the sabbath, and to be regular in his attendance upon the public means of grace. Such persons I should consider not far from the kingdom of God, and though it be indispensably necessary to enter into the spirit, as well as to perform the outward duties of religion, yet much moral benefit may be gained in improved habits of domestic and relative conduct, where unhappily there is danger the most awful and imminent, of coming short of the great salvation. It is impossible that a man of notoriously depraved and dissolute character should regularly meet his friends, or at least his neighbours in the house of God, without feeling the dreadful inconsistency of his conduct. He will stand abashed in the presence of God and the congregation, and it can scarcely be otherwise, than that he should either be induced to forsake his vices, or abandon the place; where he appears from sabbath to sabbath, clad, as it were, in a robe of white, proclaiming his own shame. The indirect influence of the sabbath, and its various ordinances, in thus purifying the outer court of the human character, even where it hath not the effect of consecrating its inner shrine is, I am persuaded, incalculably beneficial to the community.

But another order of benefits arising from the suitable employment of the sabbath, is that it has

a striking and extensive effect in storing the mind with religious knowledge and information. To say nothing of the delightful opportunity which this institution affords to persons of all classes and conditions, to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with the great principles and doctrines which appertain to their everlasting peace; there is a very large portion of the community, whose time is so completely occupied during the other days of the week, as to afford them but little leisure for the purpose of reading and instruction. And if there had been no periodical season specifically designed and consecrated for those hallowed objects, they must inevitably have sunk into a state of utter ignorance and heathenism. Every trace of divine knowledge would soon have been obliterated from their mind, every ray of spiritual light would have been quenched in the profoundest gloom. To obviate so deplorable a calamity, and to keep alive the knowledge of God upon the earth; to afford the faculties of the human mind an opportunity of expanding in distinct and vigorous apprehensions respecting the nature and attributes of Jehovah, the mysteries of redeeming love, and the stupendous destinies of the eternal world, the seventh portion of our time has been cut off by an authoritative edict of the Supreme from all common pursuits, and dedicated to the exclusive purposes of disciplining the mind in the sublime science of religion. To this we doubtless owe it that the lamp of truth has not yet become extinct among us. To this our youth are indebted for the instruction, the exhortation, the counsel, the reproof, the encouragement, which are administered to them in sabbath schools,

and institutions of a similar character, and for the inestimable advantages connected with them. To this the mass of our population are indebted for the opportunity of attending upon the ordinances of the sanctuary and the various means of grace; the preaching of the gospel, the celebration of the sacraments, the perusal of the scriptures, and those exercises of holy and undisturbed meditations, by which they are enabled to mark, learn, and inwardly to digest the great truths which are thus urged upon their attention. It is the sabbath which keeps open the communication between heaven and earth, and pours forth in regular and frequent succession a flood of celestial light upon our desolate and benighted world.

It may be finally remarked that the sabbath, when devoted to its legitimate exercises and employments, is eminently calculated to cherish a feeling of *holy satisfaction and delight* in spiritual enjoyments. This is distinctly specified by the prophet, as one of the results of duly sanctifying the day. "Then," says he, "shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." A taste and a capacity for the fruition of spiritual pleasure, for the realization of a pure and exalted joy in the contemplation of heavenly things, is doubtless one of the most valuable and important of all blessings. It was the loss of this which formed one of the most decisive and melancholy characteristics of the fall. It is the possession of this which constitutes the most unequivocal proof of the existence of divine life in the soul, and the alone meetness for the enjoyment of the blessedness of heaven. What-

ever means or exercises, therefore, have a tendency to create this appetite for spiritual nourishment—to excite in the mind this hungering and thirsting after the pleasures of divine communion, must be considered in the highest degree conducive to the health and welfare of the soul. And what in the whole range of means and instrumentalities is so peculiarly and powerfully adapted to foster this feeling in all its length and breath, its height and depth of developement, as the comprehensive ordinance of the sabbath? Every thing in the character, the design, and the occupations of this day has a direct tendency to bring us into closer contact with God, and to imbue our souls with a larger infusion of the very spirit of heaven. The whole extent and variety of its associations, the whole order of its services; its interesting and affecting recollections; its stillness, tranquillity, and seclusion; its solemn and devout assemblages; its supplications, praises, and thanksgivings; its tide of fervent and commingling sympathies; its accents of contrition, and its notes of melody; its instructions, its warnings, and its invitations, all unite to render it a broad and deep channel of communication, by which the believer is enabled to carry on a delightful and refreshing intercourse with heaven. It conducts us from this land of our estrangement to the very threshold of our Father's house, and teaches us to assay those occupations and enjoyments, in which we hope to be engaged and absorbed throughout ages innumerable and eternal.

These are a few, and only a few, of the benefits connected with the observance of the sabbath; and in the review of them, I trust the reader is

ready to acknowledge, that God does not in this ordinance call upon him to serve Him for nought. We have only given some faint glimpses of the advantages arising out of this blessed institution ; but if we could pass beyond the boundary of our present existence, and witness the results of its privileges as they extend into the vast perspective of eternal duration, well indeed might we conclude that obedience to the will of God, in this instance, is our best interest, and that in keeping his commandment there is great reward.

PART THIRD.

THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

The Warrant of Baptism as an Ordinance of the Christian Church.

CHRISTIANITY in all its departments, whether ceremonial or practical, may be truly pronounced a reasonable service. Throughout the whole range of its institutions and requirements, it deals with man as a being indued with faculties of intelligence and reflection. It invariably appeals to the mental and spiritual, as well as in some instances to the sensitive part of his nature. Where, as of necessity must have been the case, it rises above the level of his reason, and transcends the limits of his present capacities and endowments, it never urges on his belief, nor enforces on his practice any thing, which is at variance with the clear apprehensions of his understanding, or contravenes the decisions of his unsophisticated judgment. Neither among

the ordinances of the evangelical economy can we discover any one, which is vague, meagre, and insignificant. Every thing, on the contrary, which forms a component part of this glorious dispensation, is pregnant with meaning, instinct with life and interest, and replete with information and instruction. By nothing indeed is the gospel more remarkably distinguished, than by its comparative exemption from ceremonial pomp, and circumstance, and a glittering retinue of attendant rites. In the system of Christianity, viewed apart from the appendages of human pride and superstition, religion appears in its genuine character of sublime and artless simplicity—in its native form of ungarnished beauty and loveliness—stripped of the gorgeous costume of the Jewish economy, arrayed in the sober garb of truth, and adorned only with the transparent emblems of celestial purity and love.

But while Christianity is thus readily acknowledged to have cast off the typical robes and the shadowy symbols of Judaism, it is not to be imagined that in any dispensation adapted to the present character and condition of our nature, external rites and observances can be dispensed with altogether. We must wait for a higher state of existence before we attempt to sublimate the service of God into a system of pure and absolute and unmingled spirituality. As long as we perceive only through the medium of our outward senses, and are apt to receive our strongest and deepest impressions through these channels of communication, the wisdom of God has ordained that some of the most important truths and facts of

religion should be represented by palpable and material emblems. This is the real import and design of the sacraments. These institutions of divine appointment are not to be regarded as mere mechanical processes and exhibitions directed to no ulterior object, and involving no recondite and spiritual significance : nor are they to be viewed as the necessary and absolute conveyancers of divine grace and blessing. Their design is to afford a lively and affecting representation of spiritual objects and affections, and to seal them unto those who are possessed of the requisite qualifications. Under the gospel there are but two sacramental ordinances of this character, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Of the first of these the words of Christ addressed to His disciples express a direct and authoritative institution, and with very slight and partial, and comparatively modern exception, it has existed in the Christian Church from the first establishment of the gospel dispensation until now.⁽¹¹⁾ An ordinance thus almost universal in its prevalence, and so deeply important in its emblematic bearing and application, deserves our most serious and devout consideration. And what renders such an investigation into its nature and character more necessary is, that it is to be feared few of those, by whom it is observed as a ceremony, have taken any real pains to ascertain its meaning, or reflect with seriousness upon its import. Many persons there are, who bring their children to this sacred ordinance in mere compliance with the conventional practice of society, without any conception of its inherent and independent claims ; without any considerate idea of the solemn obliga-

tions, which it involves, and without any expectation of those blessings, of which it was designed to be a pledge. This is surely trifling with a divine and most significant institution. It is to reduce to a mere process of mechanical and external operation, what was intended to be in the highest degree spiritual in its character. It is to lower into a level with the most unimportant appointments of ecclesiastical usage, one of the sublimest ordinances of eternal wisdom. It is to desecrate one of the holiest mysteries of the Christian church. I would almost say—it is to sin against that Holy Spirit, whose purifying and sanctifying influences it is immediately intended to represent. Urged by these circumstances, I have been induced to institute an inquiry into the nature and character of this ordinance, in connection with other departments of the general system of divine worship, which have already engaged our attention. While we are pursuing this discussion, let no one imagine that baptism is a subject, in which he has no personal interest or concern. Such a notion would evince an utter ignorance of the real nature and extent of this comprehensive institution. It would betray a total forgetfulness of its practical and universal bearing upon the character and of the influence, which it is calculated, when duly appreciated, to exert upon the whole range of the conduct. It ought always to be borne in mind, that though baptism, according to the views and regulations of our own church, is an institution, which peculiarly appertains to infants, its effects are not to cease with infancy—that, on the contrary, it is to spread over the whole period of life—

that it is an assumption of a profession, the laws and principles of which are binding upon man throughout every hour of his existence—that it is an incorporation into a society, which pledges all its members to an unequivocal and eternal compliance with its requisitions—that it is an entrance into a covenant, which is absolute, unchangeable, and everduring. Hence it is the express injunction of the church—an injunction which has too generally fallen into neglect, that baptism should be administered publicly, in the presence of the congregation, and in the vulgar tongue, that “every man present may be put in remembrance of his own profession made to God at his baptism.”

With a view of carrying this important design into effect—of enabling every individual, who brings an infant—an object of so much interest and endearment to the sacred font, to engage in the service with seriousness of heart and intelligence of mind, and of impressively reminding of their duties those who have the vows of this covenant upon them, we shall consider the subject under the following general divisions. The Warrant of Baptism as an ordinance of the Christian church—the Symbolical Import of Baptism as emblematical of spiritual blessings—the Privileges sealed and pledged in Baptism—and the Practical Obligations, which it involves. In the present chapter we shall confine ourselves to the first of these points. That Baptism is not a human invention, a beggarly element adapted only to an age of ignorance and superstition, but is an ordinance of the Christian Church warranted by the highest authority is obvious from its having been directly *instituted and*

enforced by Christ himself. Of the fact of this appointment the direction given to the Apostles affords unquestionable evidence. When the Saviour is now about to leave the world; invested with the plenitude of universal power, he calls unto him his disciples and conveys unto them their apostolical commission in the following unequivocal terms--“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” In this language there is no obscurity, no uncertainty of meaning. The direction is plain, palpable, and decided. It commands the Apostles to carry the Gospel among all nations, and wherever they taught or made disciples, they were to receive the converts into the communion of the church by the rite of baptism. This ordinance, it is evident, was to be co-extensive with the profession of the Christian faith, nor is there any the slightest intimation afforded, that it was to be partial and confined in its range, or limited in its duration. Not the remotest hint is given that it was an institution of a temporary nature, indulged to the ignorance and prejudice of those, who were just crossing the threshold of Judaism, and emerging out of the comparative mist and darkness of that shadowy dispensation, into the pure daylight of evangelical truth, and to be abandoned with the rest of the habiliments of that infantine economy, as soon as the Christian church had reached the maturity of its knowledge, and the meridian of its spiritual illuminations. It is palpably and undeniably apparent, on the contrary, that teaching and baptizing were to go hand in

hand—that no sooner had the mind been sufficiently instructed in the truth, and the heart brought under its influence, than the profession of the faith was to be sealed by baptism, and to render the appointment more clear and unequivocal, the form of administration is distinctly specified. Those, who were to be incorporated into the church by this solemn initiatory rite, were to be received in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There was to be an acknowledgment of these divine persons, as they subsist in the essence of Deity, and as they bear their respective parts in the economy of human redemption.⁽¹²⁾ Accordant with this injunction of the Saviour, we find to have been the practice of the Apostles throughout the whole course of their ministry. In the history of their labours we find frequent mention of persons being baptized into the faith of Christ. Sometimes whole families are recorded as having undergone this ceremony, and the Epistles of St. Paul and the other Apostles, abound with references to this ordinance, and to the effects, with which it was expected to be attended. From these circumstances alone, it would be sufficiently manifest that baptism is a divine and authoritative institution of the Christian church.

Connect with these considerations the unquestionable fact, that under the Gospel the Sacrament of Baptism has succeeded that of circumcision, which prevailed under the dispensation of the Law. It was the great distinguishing rite of the Jewish community, as originally settled with Abraham, that on the eighth day after their birth, the children should be brought to be circumcised. This was

an ordinance of God's own express appointment, and whoever had not duly observed it, was not considered within the pale of the church. During the whole period of the Mosaic economy, this rite was observed with regular and uninterrupted succession. And so great was the value and importance, which the Jews generally attached to it, that they imagined this alone would be sufficient to secure their salvation. It was that, to which their mind clung with most tenacity, after it had now been obviously superceded by the gospel. As it was the appointed door of entrance into the sanctuary of the visible church, they were apt to imagine it to be equally necessary and effectual to open the door of the kingdom of Heaven.

Strictly analogous to this initiatory rite of the Jewish church, is the Sacrament of Baptism under the gospel. It was the abandonment of the former as now virtually abrogated with the ceremonial dispensation of which it formed a distinguishing part, and the adoption of the latter as the badge of the higher and more spiritual economy—it was this substitution of one appointed rite for another, which in the age of the Apostles was regarded as the outward, ostensible act of transition from Judaism to Christianity. So decidedly was this the case, that the Apostle does not hesitate to assert, that if the Galatians were circumcised, in token of their adherence to the law of Moses, Christ would profit them nothing. And although there were instances, in which the observance of the former ceremony was tolerated by the Apostles, as a mere means of removing the prejudices, and conciliating the regards of those, who were yet

imperfectly enlightened, yet it is manifest that this was only a temporary concession, and that with the complete establishment of Christianity that painful rite, which was characterized by effusion of blood, was to be exchanged for the milder process of ablution in the emblematic laver of baptism. The one was evidently intended to occupy the place, and to answer all the purposes of the other. And this brings us to a department of the general subject of baptism of very considerable importance—the right of infants to a participation in this primary seal of the Christian covenant. If the baptismal ordinance under the evangelical economy was designed to be the counterpart, and to sustain the analogous relation of a substitute of circumcision, as it existed under the legal dispensation, the question is at once decided. And as the fact of such a substitutional appointment, and of such an identity of purpose, appears unquestionable from the whole tenor of scripture, I know not how, upon any legitimate and tenable grounds, the conclusion is to be avoided. If circumcision, as is acknowledged by all, was a rite and a federal ordinance, to which infants had a peculiar claim as the medium of their admission into the privileges of the church, and if this ceremony has been confessedly abolished since the introduction of the Christian dispensation, it follows, of necessity, that if they are excluded from baptism, no external means has been provided under the gospel for admitting them into the church at all. The children of Christians, therefore, though born under a higher and more gracious economy, are in a worse condition in reference to sacramental privileges, than were those of the

Jews. Until they had arrived at years of maturity, they would have no visible or federal bond of union whatever with the church of Christ. They would so far be aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and though we do not say that they would be without hope or without God in the world, they would certainly be without covenant right to those peculiar privileges, which are pledged to those, who have been admitted by sacramental incorporation into a union with the body of Christ. Even though we had no intimation whatever, therefore, of the will of God, or of the practice of the church at its first establishment in reference to this subject—and we know that there are various incidental hints of the prevalence of infant baptism in the writings of the Apostles, and no direct evidence to the contrary, we should still have found it difficult to believe that little children, whom the Saviour so graciously took in his arms and blessed, declaring that of such was the kingdom of heaven, were placed upon a lower footing in respect of ecclesiastical privileges under the gospel, than they had been under the law.⁽¹³⁾

There appears to be no just reason to doubt; therefore, that in bringing children to the baptismal font, Christians have the same warrant, and the same promise to encourage their hope and confirm their faith, as the Jewish parents had in uniting their infant offspring to the church of God by circumcision. The necessity is the same—the divine institution is as obviously binding—the ground of expectation is as clear and ample—the benign disposition of Jehovah and his readiness to embrace in the arms of his mercy and love those

who are thus early initiated into the profession of his name and the acknowledgment of his authority, are as fully and unequivocally attested in favour of those, whom we bring into his temple, as in the case of those who were introduced within the bonds of his covenant at any former period, or under any preceding dispensation in the history of his church. We have the sanction of a positive institution enforced under an economy infinitely more exclusive and confined than that of the gospel—an institution, which has now been undeniably superceded by that which is authoritatively enjoined. Let believers bring their children therefore—those objects of their anxieties and endearments—those tender plants of hope and expectation, which have been entrusted to their care and training, to this fountain of emblematic purity and holiness; but let them bring them in faith—in deep seriousness and sobriety of spirit—with a fervent and devout desire that they may be born not only of water, but also of the Spirit—that they may indeed be cleansed from the guilt and pollution of sin—that they may be sanctified from the womb, and that the work of grace, which may now be commenced in their souls, may be carried on with uninterrupted efficacy and power until it be consummated in glory. Let them bring them to the ordinance with these feelings, and they will have the best proof of their warrant for thus acting in blessings which will doubtless be poured down upon their offspring. Regard not this act of sublime, and spiritual, and impressive significance as an idle ceremony. Approach it not in a spirit of levity. Touch not this emblem of the covenant

with an unholy hand. Make it manifest, on the contrary, by the seriousness and solemnity of your deportment, and by the fervent sincerity of your devotion, that you believe yourselves to be acting under the immediate sanction and authority of the Most High.

As a further proof of the *warrant* of Baptism as an ordinance of the Christian church, it may be regarded as an act of holy *Dedication*, in which believers present their offspring unto God. There is something peculiarly striking and impressive—something remarkably congenial with all the principles and feelings of a christian parent in the act of thus solemnly and deliberately surrendering his infant child, at this early dawn of his existence, into the hand and to the gracious care of God. Those, who can appreciate this exalted privilege, and devoutly avail themselves of the opportunity it affords them, would feel that if there had been no such ordinance appointed—that if there had been no established and authoritative medium, by which they might solemnly dedicate their children unto God, it would have left a blank in the catalogue of their privileges. Having been enabled in faith to yield up themselves unto God, confessing that they are not their own, but have been bought with a price, they are naturally anxious to give their children unto Him also. They would recognize His superior claim to their services, and thus, if possible, forestall them unto Him. They would plant them at once in his vineyard, so that they may grow up and flourish in his court, and bring forth the substantial fruits of holiness and righteousness in his service. For the exercise of these

devout and fervent desires, the ordinance of Baptism affords an appropriate and most delightful opportunity. It calls upon Christian parents to do that, which their own feelings would dictate. It encourages them with Elkanah and the devout Hannah, to bring their children into the house of the Lord, and to present them solemnly unto God, that they may be His for time and for eternity—His to serve him faithfully and devotedly in the gospel of his Son, while life remains, and His to glorify Him and to be blessed and glorified in Him throughout eternity. In this ordinance they are invited to a covenant engagement, by which they bind themselves in behalf of the children, which He hath given them, that they shall be trained up in His fear, and reared through the days of their youth in His nurture and admonition. It was with a view of securing the fulfilment of this prospective stipulation that the practice of requiring sponsors, who pledge themselves for the Christian education of those, who in their infancy were introduced into the covenant of baptism, was adopted in the primitive church, and has since been received and continued in our own. And it were well if this solemn engagement was in general more seriously pondered by those, who for the most part are so ready to enter into it.⁽¹⁴⁾ Nothing connected with an ordinance so sacred in its origin, so authoritative in its obligations, and comprehensive in its demands, ought to be considered as a mere matter of form. In case of the demise or the wilful and palpable neglect of the parents themselves, it doubtless devolves as a solemn duty upon those who voluntarily accepted of the trust, to

use such means as circumstances admit with a view of carrying into effect upon the objects of their charge the vows, to which they pledged themselves in their behalf.

As still further confirmatory of the Warrant of Baptism, as an ordinance of the Christian Church and especially as it bears upon the right of infants to a participation of its privileges and blessings, we may notice the *Promise* of God illustrated by the conduct and declaration of the Saviour himself. When Jehovah receives His people into a covenant relation to Himself, He graciously vouchsafes to embrace their children also within the general range of the engagement. He pledges himself to be a God unto them and to their children. And although this federal stipulation does not amount to an absolute and unconditional declaration, that their offspring shall partake of the saving blessings of the gospel, it certainly secures an extension unto them of the important privileges connected with a state of incorporation into His visible church. The tenor of the divine promise is, that these advantages shall be made good not only to believers, but also to their seed after them. And it is in the ordinance of Baptism, that this promise receives its solemn and authoritative ratification. Here Jehovah meets His people, and receives at their hands those objects of their devout and affectionate solicitude, which they are anxious to consign to His care and to place under His fatherly protection, into the bond of His covenanted mercies. He admits them into a conditional interest in all the blessings of the everlasting gospel. Within this limitation He adopts them into His family.

He unites them into an external federative alliance with the great society of the faithful ; and in this sacred relation to Himself, to His Son Jesus Christ, and to the general body of His Church He provides for them every needful blessing. He secures for them every requisite aid to enable them to love and serve Him, and to prepare them for the full enjoyment of His presence. It was in the spirit of this benign disposition, and in exemplification of the readiness, with which those who are presented unto God are received into his favour, that the compassionate Saviour of the world took the little children into His arms and poured His special blessing upon them. In every age and under every dispensation of the church, in fact, children have been the objects of Jehovah's peculiar care and tenderness, and the two successive institutions of circumcision and baptism were unquestionably appointed to be the means of admitting them into outward communion with the church. In these ordinances provision was made that they should be rescued out of nature's uncovenanted alienation and estrangement, and brought within the favoured and privileged inclosure of the Church of God—that the seal of appropriation should be fixed upon them, marking them out as absolutely belonging unto God in the state of unconscious infancy, that they might learn with the opening dawn of reason, and the progressive developement of their powers, to regard themselves as His children, and to recognize His paramount claims upon their love and obedience. .

These considerations are sufficient to establish the Warrant of Baptism as a distinguishing ordi-

nance of the Christian Church, and as embracing within its evident range of application every age and condition of mankind. This is demonstrated from the fact of the ordinance having been directly appointed and established by Christ himself—from its having obviously succeeded circumcision, the analogous institution of the Jewish church—from its being a solemn and public act of dedication, in which professed believers devote and consecrate themselves, or their offspring unto God, and from the promise of God pledged unto believers and to their seed after them as graciously illustrated in the acts, and declarations of the great Redeemer of the world, while He sojourned here upon earth. From an ordinance so gracious and comprehensive a variety of inferences of the deepest importance, and of the most extensive interest and application may be derived. We may particularly contemplate as strikingly displayed in it the riches of divine grace and the supreme benignity of the gospel as a saving scheme. The very commission, which our Saviour assigns unto His disciples as he sends them forth to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, affords a remarkable illustration of these generous and exalted qualities. He directs them to go and teach all nations, or to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Hitherto the manifestation of the love of God towards man had been partial and confined—the labours of His most zealous and devoted servants had been limited by a providential appointment to one nation and country—the covenant of circumcision was specifically made with the seed of Abraham only : the streams

of divine mercy thus flowed within comparatively narrow channels, and diffused themselves over a very circumscribed range. But now the grace of God, like a river, which had long been forced to pursue its way and to urge its course within closer banks and over a more confined bed, bursts over the feeble and temporary boundaries, which had hitherto checked its current, and pours its refreshing streams to the remotest extremities of the earth. The gospel, as embodying that grace delights to have free course and be glorified. It goeth forth with an aggressive movement, and offers its blessings gratuitously and indiscriminately to all the nations of the earth. It invites them, irrespectively of age, of country, of past character or condition to the laver of regeneration. It throws open to them the door of the sanctuary, and encourages them to enter in—it urges them to yield themselves unto the Lord—to recognize His boundless authority—to commit themselves and theirs entirely into His hands, and to unite themselves to Him in the bonds of an everlasting covenant, which is well ordered in all things and sure.

CHAPTER II.

The Symbolical Import of Baptism.

To a mind thoroughly imbued with the spirit of piety and devotion, the whole system of nature is one vast, comprehensive, and diversified mass of emblems, exhibiting to its view under various forms and combinations, the several principles and doctrines—the precepts and promises of revealed religion. Such a connection between the two great departments of the divine government is not altogether ideal. The author of both schemes is the same. The God of nature is also the God revealed in the Scriptures. The great framer of the universe is also the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He, who regulates and controls the vast machinery of creation by laws, which are absolute, irresistible, and uniform in their operation, is likewise the Supreme Ruler of His church, and the arbiter of its everlasting destinies. It ought not to be regarded as a matter of surprize, therefore, that in many respects the phenomena of nature, and the various events developed in the order of God's providential government, should be found

strikingly to symbolize with the concerns of religion, and the administration of the kingdom of grace. The affairs of creation, indeed, in their diversified movements and operations, may be regarded as a store-house of illustrations, exhibiting under the most impressive aspects the great facts of the spiritual and eternal world. The scriptures abound with examples, in which the inspired writers avail themselves of this method of conveying the truths, which it was their aim to teach or to inculcate. The allegorical representations contained in the Old Testament, and the parables of our Lord in the New, may be considered as belonging to the same general mode of embodying heavenly things in such forms of earthly illustration as may carry them home with more direct and vivid impression to the mind.

This is the end, not only of all parabolical instruction, and of the extended references to the objects and appearances of the natural world found on the page of inspiration, but also of all those external rites and institutions, which in a degree, more or less, have been attached to the pure essence of religion as a spiritual principle in every age of the world. This was the design of the numerous and diversified observances enjoined in the Jewish ritual—the sacrifices—the abstinences—the ablutions, which formed so conspicuous and essential a part of the services of the temple. Such observances had, for the most part, no inherent virtue or excellency, but each of them was intended to be, as it were, a limb belonging to a general and complete body of religious ceremonies, throughout every portion of which a living princi-

ple of truth, and holiness, and piety was to be diffused. Without such an animating and all-pervading spirit they would only hang, like decayed and withered branches to that tree of life, which has been planted in the courts of the Lord's house, sapless, fruitless, and unsightly. In considering the nature and object of the sacramental institutions of the church, we must never lose sight of this distinction—a distinction so clearly marked and so fully recognized by herself, in the brief exposition which she gives of these ordinances as comprising in their legitimate and efficient character, an outward and visible sign, and an inward and spiritual grace. A sacrament in its genuine sense is a casket of palpable and material exhibition, conveying under the broad seal of heaven to those who are duly prepared for its reception, a jewel of spiritual meaning and influence. It is an ark of the covenant formed under God's own immediate superintendence and direction, and designed to contain in legible characters a comprehensive record of his will; and if it ceases to be regarded as any thing more than a mere framework of outward visible device—if it be no longer viewed as comprising, within its mysterious symbols, truths of sublime and heavenly import; instead of that cloud of sacredness, which has rested over it in the eye of the spiritual church, it may be written upon it—Ichabod—the glory has departed. The great difficulty in investigating the nature of the Christian Sacraments is to avoid both extremes—that of regarding them as mere material and unmeaning exhibitions, and that of absolutely identifying them with the grace of which they are in every

instance the expressive signs, and in many cases the direct channels. A connection closer or more intimate than this neither scripture nor experience will be found to warrant.⁽¹⁵⁾ It must never be forgotten that one principal object of a sacrament is to teach truth, and to teach it by the most striking and impressive means, as well as to convey grace.

In the former chapter we considered the *Warrant* of Baptism as an ordinance of the Christian church. In the present I propose to inquire into the symbolical import of Baptism as emblematical of spiritual truths, privileges, and blessings. Baptism, as an outward act, is too well known among ourselves to require any explanation or description. It is an application of water to the person—whether this be done by sprinkling or by immersion, is a matter of indifference, and is determined in either way by no positive and absolute direction of scripture—accompanied by a distinct recognition of its being done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Many persons there doubtless are, who look no farther—who penetrate no deeper into the spiritual meaning and import of this rite than the eye of sense can reach. In the water, which is applied in this holy ordinance, they see nothing more than the material element—in the words of sublime and significant import, which are at the same time uttered they hear nothing—they apprehend nothing beyond the articulate sounds that are pronounced. To such persons the ordinance to all spiritual and practical purposes is a dead letter. Viewed, as they behold it, it is a puerile and unmeaning ceremony—no better than

any one of the "divers washings," in which the religion of the carnal Jews mainly consisted. To the eye, which has been enlightened by scripture, and purified by grace, however, this ordinance appears in a very different light.

According to such an estimate Baptism may be regarded as a symbol of our *profession* as Christians. Every church—indeed, every incorporated society of men, must have some initiatory rite—some distinguishing badge or token, by which its members may be primarily introduced into it, and their subsequent connection with it may be clearly marked and recognized. In the Jewish church, as has been already shewn, this rite was circumcision. Whoever had undergone that ceremony, and had not publicly and deliberately cast off his faith, was considered a member of the general community, and made a profession of the principles which it held. In the Christian church the seal of incorporation is given and affixed in baptism. Previously to undergoing this solemn ceremony, no one is entitled to be considered as a Christian even in name. In the earlier periods of the history of the church baptism was always considered as the commencing point—as the first public and deliberate assumption of the Christian profession. Such a decided and essential change in the relative condition of the individual did they conceive baptism to effect, that they frequently put off the ceremony until they were now at the point of closing their earthly pilgrimage. Those, who were unwilling, or imagined themselves to be unable to cast off at once and entirely the evil practices, to which they had been accustomed in a state of heathenism,

were loath to incur the additional responsibilities imposed by baptism, until it now appeared that they were beyond the possibility of contracting the guilt attendant on the violation of those responsibilities. They deemed, and so far rightly deemed that he, who is baptized, takes upon himself the profession of the gospel in all its demands and obligations. In this ceremony are visibly and strikingly represented all the great principles of the Christian profession. In this initiatory rite—in this central point all the lines of truth and practical obligation seem to converge. He, who is baptized, virtually professes and solemnly pledges himself to believe every doctrine—to acknowledge every demand—to observe every prohibition, and to practice every duty within the whole range of the Christian system. In the very act of incorporation into the body of Christ we make a professed and unreserved surrender of our individuality of character and conduct. We become united to a head, from which we express our willingness to receive light to inform and direct our judgments, and a law to regulate our actions. As face answereth face in water, so we may see reflected from the pure and limpid surface of the baptismal font, the varied features of the Christian profession in outlines, which are definite, palpable, and unequivocal. Every one of those who have undergone this rite, engages to abide by all the demands of the Christian religion. We can appeal to him as bound by these obligations, and in every instance of deviation from the strictest and most rigid requirements of the gospel, he stands convicted of the most palpable inconsistency. He stultifies

and denies his own profession. He gives the lie to his own baptismal engagements. For, in fact, all those who have been baptized in the name of Christ, profess the whole of His religion, and they are bound, if they would not be inconsistent with themselves, and would not brand a mark of infamy upon their own foreheads in the hallowed sign of the cross, to rise to the highest level of the requisitions of the everlasting gospel.

But another most important feature of the Christian character, of which baptism may be considered as a symbol, is the *Regeneration* of the soul through the influences of the Holy Spirit. This indeed is the great blessing, which that significant rite has always been regarded as intended pre-eminently to represent. In the ordinance of baptism, both as a sacramental institution and as a material act, the nature and the necessity of regeneration appear to be very clearly and impressively exhibited to the view. The very appointment of such an ordinance demonstrates that man is by nature in a fallen and depraved condition, and that he requires a process of restoration and ablution in order to render him meet for the enjoyment of the divine presence in glory. This was doubtless one of the chief ends which it was designed to answer. It was to teach the great doctrine of the deep depravity of human nature, by presenting in visible emblems before the eye, the means of its purification. It was to impress upon the mind the all-important truth declared in explicit and reiterated assertion by the Saviour himself, that unless a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The sign was appointed—the symbol

was established—not to supersede the necessity of the thing signified—not to cherish the fatal delusion that the baptism of water alone is sufficient, and that all, which is understood by regeneration, is absolutely and invariably conveyed in that ordinance, wherever it is duly administered; but it was to lead the thoughts to something deeper and more intimately connected with the inner man, than the effusion of a few drops of water, accompanied with the utterance of a few articulate sounds. It was to aid the mind in its endeavour to realize the conception of that mysterious change, which man as a fallen creature must undergo before he is fit for the society of the blest. It was to embody in a palpable form what in abstract statement or simple requirement would have been too sublimely pure to be perceived by the blunt eye of corrupt mortality. It was to occupy the middle space between things natural and things spiritual—the ascending step from things earthly to things heavenly. It was to be a standing recognition of the personality and influence of that Spirit, whose goings forth were from eternity, and whose brooding movements over the surface of a dark and bewildered chaos educes light out of darkness, order out of confusion, and harmony, peace, and amenity out of the conflict of discordant elements.

The change of character effected in that process, which is expressed by regeneration and symbolized by baptism, must be deep, genuine, and universal. It is equivalent to a new birth. It is the communication of a new principle—a principle of life, and purity, and holiness, which will gradually spread over the whole character, and develope its energies

in giving a new impulse to all the powers and affections of the soul. It is a moral and spiritual creation, in virtue of which old things pass away and all things become new. It is an emanation from above—a flow of light and love—of grace and truth, issuing from Him who is the fountain of all good, and poured into the regenerated soul with an enlightening, renewing, sanctifying, and transforming effect. By the powerful and salutary energy which it exerts, it gradually transfuses itself through the mind, and moulds the whole character into a similarity with the divine image. It lifts off the veil of natural blindness from the understanding, and enables it to see every object connected with the spiritual and eternal world in a new light. It shews the evil and danger—the guilt and enormity of sin. It exhibits to the eye of the soul the beauty and excellency of holiness, and the superior blessedness of those, who have sincerely devoted themselves to the service of God. It destroys the enmity of the carnal mind, and sheds abroad the love of God in the heart in all the fervour and intensity of a devout and grateful affection. It dispels every corrupt and malignant passion from its predominant hold upon the mind, and displays itself in all those fruits of the Spirit, which are equally conducive to the glory of God and to the best interests of man. It produces a habit of entire dependence upon the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer, as the grounds of acceptance with God, and vindicates the character of the faith and hope of the gospel by a life of universal holiness and obedience.

This, in brief, is the nature of that regenera-

tion—of that new birth, of which baptism is the outward visible sign. Any sacramental blessing—any renovating process, which falls essentially short of this will prove utterly inadequate and unavailing. In proportion to the depth of our fall must be the height of purity and holiness to which we must be raised. Correspondent with the extent of the blindness and ignorance—the moral defilement and insensibility, which sin had entailed upon our nature, must be that work of grace upon our souls, which alone can qualify us for the enjoyment of the inheritance of the saints in light. Such a transformation of mind and character it is indispensably necessary that we should individually undergo. Without this the initiatory and symbolical rite of baptism is but a shadow without any counterpart of substantial blessing. It is a cloud, under which, like the Israelites, we may pass, but without receiving any spiritual strength or refreshment. Let us not delude ourselves, therefore, with the groundless and perilous notion, that because we have been born of water—that because we have put off, so to speak, the filth of the flesh, we are exempted from the necessity of any further purification. Let us remember that, in this as well as every other observance, bodily exercise, if unaccompanied with the life-giving Spirit profiteth little; and that baptized but unconverted Christians differ from unbaptized Heathens, only in that the former are subject to an awful and overwhelming weight of responsibility, which does not attach unto the latter. Let us examine ourselves, therefore, solemnly and deliberately, nor let us rest content until in addition to the process of

ablution in the baptismal font, we have the answer of a good conscience, that we have been purified from the pollutions of sin, and that in the healthy and vigorous developement of the powers of the new man, which has been created in us, we are daily growing in grace, and advancing with rapid steps towards the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ.

But not only does baptism, as the introductory rite of the Church, indicate our profession as Christians—not only in the same character does it hold forth to us in an emblem the most clear and transparent, the great and important doctrine of spiritual regeneration, but it also points out to us the necessity of the *application of the blood* of Jesus Christ to the conscience for the removal of the guilt of sin. In order to our deliverance and salvation, we must not only be baptized with water, but we must also be baptized with blood—the blood as of a lamb without spot and without blemish. The very fact of our being admitted into the church in the name of Christ, as the Son of God, implies a belief in Him, not merely as actually existing, but also as the appointed Saviour of the world. As water is poured over the countenance, or as the body is plunged, as was often probably done in the primitive church,⁽¹⁵⁾ so the atoning blood of Immanuel must be sprinkled over the mind and conscience. As the infant is brought to the font, to undergo a ceremonial and emblematical purification, so must the believer betake himself to the fountain of Christ's blood in order that every stain may be removed, and that in the eye of absolute and consummate purity, he may

stand acquitted from every offence. With the ordinance of baptism the blessing of a free forgiveness as well as of complete sanctification, is sealed in the engagements of a covenant, which on the part of Jehovah is infallibly secure of its accomplishment. The relative condition, into which it introduces, embraces within its comprehensive range all the privileges of the everlasting gospel, and it requires only a personal ratification of its provisions, by the exercise of a genuine repentance and a lively faith, to secure their actual possession.

When Jehovah directs that little children should be brought unto Him, and presented unto Him in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, it is a clear and unequivocal intimation that He is willing to receive them into his favour—that as the material pollution, which may have attached unto them is removed by the application of the natural element of water, so the moral impurity, which adheres to them, may be cleansed on their betaking themselves to that fountain, which was opened for sin and uncleanness. Whatever may be the depth—whatever may be the extent—whatever may be the enormity of our past sins and transgressions—whatever may be the accumulation of moral and spiritual defilement, which has gathered in varied and inveterate incrustation upon our character, we have only to apply by faith the blood of an incarnate Saviour, and we shall be as pure from every charge of guilt as Adam, when he basked in the sunshine of divine favour, and reflected in living lustre the radiations of the divine image amidst the bowers of the paradise of God. All this delightful and encouraging truth is

taught and symbolically exhibited to the eye in that ordinance, which has been appointed to be the door of entrance into the precincts of the Christian church. Let every view of this sacred institution, therefore, lead our mind to the cross, on which the Son of God was baptized with a baptism of blood in our behalf, and in order that being sprinkled with that blood we might enjoy that peace of God which passeth all understanding. Let it direct our contemplations to the scene of Immanuel's sufferings—to the deep sorrow of his soul, as the streams of agony burst forth at every pore during his conflict with the powers of darkness—to the mixture of water and blood, which issued forth from His wounded side as He lay suspended on the cross—to his descent into the grave—to his resurrection from the tomb—to his ascension into glory, having led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. Let it fix our eye thus upon the Saviour and it cannot fail to have a powerful effect in conforming us to his image, and in bringing our whole character more completely under the influence and control of His sanctifying and renewing grace.

Closely allied to the facts already noticed as symbolized in the baptismal ordinance, we may subjoin that of *Dying* unto the world and *Living* unto holiness. St. Paul frequently represents believers as having been *buried* with Christ by baptism into death, and also as having by the same process risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. The ordinance of circumcision also, which in its literal sense has been superseded by baptism, is

employed in its spiritual import, by the same apostle to express that great change, which takes place in the character, when it is really brought under the influence of that Spirit, whose peculiar office and prerogative it is to crucify us unto the world and the world unto us. The Colossians he describes as those, who were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ—as those, whom being dead in the uncircumcision of their flesh He had quickened together with Him, having forgiven them all trespasses. The same rule of spiritual application must guide our views of baptism. In this institution there is an evident design to shadow forth that death unto the world in its various temptations, allurements, and sinful pursuits, which the christian is bound to undergo. In baptism he emblematically dies with Christ that he may spiritually rise with Christ. In this hallowed stream the old man of sin is figuratively drowned, that the new man of holiness and righteousness may emerge in all the freshness and purity and glory of cleansed and renovated powers. In this Jordan of divine appointment the leprosy of sin, which has so deeply infected our nature, is to be left, and when we have passed through this washing of regeneration we are placed under a most solemn and impressive obligation, to strive habitually to be holy as God is holy—to be perfect as our Father, who is in heaven, is perfect.

It was in the recollection of this that our own church has required solemn vows to be made at baptism, pledging the individual, who is thereby received into the church by a prospective engage-

ment to renounce the vain pomp and glory of the world—the sinful lusts and affections of the flesh, and to continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end. The baptismal covenant indeed, is pre-eminently a covenant of purity and holiness. It transfers those, who enter into it from a state of utter alienation to a state of professed and federative relation unto God. It binds them by most weighty obligations, superinduced by this ordinance, to the abandonment of all sin and the practice of all holiness. It cuts in sunder, when its object is really attained, the tie of living sympathy, by which they had been united unto the world, and the world had been united unto them. It produces a mutual disrelish and insensibility. It reminds, or ought to remind those, who have been brought within its bonds at every step in their progress, that they have been at least symbolically born for higher things than to be the slaves of their bodies—that they are citizens of a more glorious city, and heirs of a better kingdom than this world affords; and, therefore, that they are bound by the most palpable demands of duty and consistency to live above the world—to live as strangers and pilgrims here below—to live soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present world, looking for the glorious appearing of the Lord God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

These appear to be the leading points which are symbolized or exhibited in emblem in the ordinance of baptism. It seals unto us our profession, pledging us to believe all the articles of the Christian Faith. It displays in a very striking and significant figure the regeneration of the soul

through the influences of the Holy Spirit—that new birth without experiencing which the Saviour of the world hath declared that no man shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. It exhibits to the eye of faith the application of the blood of Jesus Christ as sprinkled upon the conscience for the removal of the guilt of sin, and securing acceptance with God. It finally enforces by the most solemn and authoritative obligations, the duty of dying unto the world, attended with habits of universal purity of heart and life. These are the grand essentials of the christian character, which baptism emphatically teaches. They constitute the spirit of those great truths, which it was designed to embody. They are manifestations of its divine institution and authority, and commend it not only as a sacrament to be observed at our first introduction into the church, but also as an object of most delightful, interesting and instructive contemplation, and as calculated to convey the most impressive and salutary lessons to every age and condition of life. Viewed under these aspects it is a great remembrancer of duty—drawing forth to the view and urging upon the attention of every individual the solemn vows and obligations, by which as a christian he is bound to be governed.

From this view of the subject we cannot fail to be struck with the absolute necessity of the several blessings here exhibited. This idea is implied, indeed, in the very appointment of the sacrament of baptism. When Christ asserted to Nicodemus that unless a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God, it was no doubtful or unmeaning asseveration. It is a fact which

stands recorded in the word of eternal truth, that we must be born again, if ever we would be admitted into heaven. We must be brought to a cordial and unreserved reception of the great truths, the fundamental principles of the gospel. We must make an open and undisguised profession of the gospel in the midst of a sinful world, and of a perverse and gainsaying generation. We must not only apply the outward emblem of the blood of Christ, whether in baptism or the Lord's supper, but we must really sprinkle that blood by faith upon our consciences, so that we may have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We must mortify our members, which are upon the earth; we must no longer yield those members as servants of iniquity unto iniquity, but we must yield ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of holiness unto righteousness. We must endeavour habitually to shine as lights in the world—to rise to the lofty demands of our character and profession as Christians, and to make it manifest to all around us, that we have not only been baptized with water, but that we have been baptized also with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. Let us also learn from this subject to admire and adore the gracious condescension of Jehovah, in providing so many means for our salvation; for it is to this great and glorious result, that all preparatory measures are intended to contribute. To this end every external observance—every sacramental rite—every instrumental agency is designed to conduce. If we have been directed to baptize our children, it is that we

may respectively feel our obligation to seek for those inward blessings of grace and love—of purity, holiness and truth, which alone can render us meet for heaven. Let us look through all outward means to that influence of the Eternal Spirit, which alone can endue them with life or efficacy. Let us penetrate beneath the veil—let us take with us the blood of sprinkling and enter into the holy of holies. Let us go boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may have strength to help us in every time of need. Having such an High Priest over the house of God—even Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. And thus fixing the eye of our contemplation steadily upon Him, who hath entered for us into the holy place not made with hands we shall find ourselves transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord.

CHAPTER III.

The Privileges Sealed and Pledged in Baptism.

IN the discussion of ceremonial institutions, it is a very delicate point to mark out the real position, which they occupy in the economy of human salvation. While we assert in the most decided and unequivocal terms, that as outward observances they are not the necessary conductors of the spiritual blessings, which they represent—that in this imperfect form of external operations, they may exist apart from all experimental connection with the inner man of the heart, there is a danger lest we should inadvertently degrade them from their due and legitimate rank in the order of appointed means. There is a danger lest we should reduce them to a level with the usages of human authority, and of ecclesiastical discipline; lest they should be divested in our estimation, of all that mysterious significance, with which it was doubtless intended that they should be associated in our minds. There is the opposite and more prevalent danger of resting in them, as points of absolute consummation and perfection, as stamping upon the soul the blessings which they exhibit in emblem, without the possibility of failure. St.

Paul was unquestionably sensible of the importance of a correct view of this subject, while he argued the utter inadequacy of circumcision as a security of acceptance with God. While the Apostle was shewing the futility of such a notion, and maintaining that they who had undergone this rite might still be aliens from the commonwealth of Israel—without hope and without God in the world, he supposes an objector to ask—what advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision? St. Paul, without in any degree invalidating his previous declarations, instantly replies, “much every way;” and proceeds to enumerate a variety of benefits, which he represents as belonging by covenant engagement unto those, upon whom the ceremony has been performed.

The same line of argument is applicable to the ordinance of baptism. The language of our own church as expressive of the spiritual import of this institution, is peculiarly strong and emphatic. In accordance with the general style of the apostolical epistles, which were addressed to professing, and doubtless for the most part true Christians—it seems at the first view to take it for granted, that the individual baptized has indeed been regenerated, and born anew of the Spirit. Bringing the principle of a comprehensive analogy to bear upon the interpretation of this passage, there can be no question that the church intended in this case to use the language, not of literal and absolute assertion, but of charitable generalization. As the whole service is obviously designed for real Christians—assuming in the exercise of a broad and expansive charity that they are true believers,

so the baptismal part of it has an evident and intentional adaptation to a state of actual purification and ablution through the influences of the Holy Spirit. The very fact of the church's directing its members, previously to the actual administration of the ordinance, to pray that the infant may receive the forgiveness of his sins by spiritual regeneration, is indeed a proof that she regards the separation of the outward sign from the inward grace as a possible and not improbable case. And having thus in faith pleaded a fulfilment of the promise she assumes, while there is no evidence to the contrary, that the promised blessing has been vouchsafed—without however committing herself to the dangerous delusion, that wherever the baptism of water has been received, the baptism of the Spirit has been simultaneously experienced. On the supposition of the several conditions of the covenant being duly complied with, it is difficult to know upon what grounds the church would have been justified in coming to a different judgment.

But although baptism, any more than circumcision, does not absolutely and invariably secure the spiritual blessings, of which it was designed to be a symbol, we may safely affirm of the former as the Apostle does of the latter, that when duly and faithfully administered, there is much profit connected with it. The economy of the gospel, as well as the general economy of nature and of providence, is a system of gradations. In the developement of its principles there are stages of relative advancement towards the realization of its ultimate object—there are helps and advantages, which, though they do not of themselves form an

infallible pledge that he who is possessed of them, shall be the subject of saving grace, yet will assuredly bring him into nearer contact with its influences—which, though they may not actually land him on the shore of everlasting glory, will unquestionably waft him nearer to the confines of that shore. Of persons, who are possessed of such secondary blessings—of such subordinate benefits we may say, in the language of the Saviour Himself, that they are not far from the kingdom of God. This is the light in which I view the ordinance of baptism. It is a federal transaction instituted by divine authority, in which certain privileges and blessings are promised on the performance of certain conditions.

Among these we would specify that it introduces those, who are the subjects of it, under the gracious economy of the Christian covenant. A relative change precisely analogous to this was experienced by the Jewish infants, who underwent the rite of circumcision. That significant and expressive ceremony did not, as St. Paul repeatedly asserts, necessarily produce a change of heart. It did not in every instance introduce a new principle of life and holiness into the soul—it did not of necessity destroy the enmity of the carnal mind against God—it did not universally render those, who partook of it, new creatures. But yet the Apostle asserts that there was much profit in it every way. It brought its subjects within the range of a divine and highly-privileged economy of ecclesiastical and spiritual government. It rescued them from the desolate and abandoned condition of an alienated and uncovenanted world.

It brought them within the lines of a secluded and consecrated inclosure, so that in virtue of their relative condition as living under an economy of spiritual privileges and advantages, they might truly exclaim in the language of the devout psalmist, "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places ; yea I have a goodly heritage."

Similar in its character, but still higher in the order of its attendant privileges, is that change of position which takes place when the seal of the baptismal covenant is applied to the soul. The individual, who passes through this initiatory process, makes the same kind of transition as he who leaves the wide field of savage, barbarous, and lawless life, and is brought under a system of regular and established government. Such a one obviously undergoes a most important change of relative condition, though he may still fall short of the highest blessings and immunities of the social compact into which he has entered. He is at once placed in new circumstances—he is subject to a new order of influences—he is bound by new obligations and responsibilities, and he is invested with new and most important privileges. He has now reached a higher elevation in the scale of being. He now breathes an atmosphere refined and purified by the conjoined labour and art of reclaimed and civilized humanity. He ceases to depend upon the coarse and precarious produce of his own individual efforts. He becomes clothed with the higher attributes of social man, and enjoys the incalculable advantages arising from the combinations of confederated wisdom and strength. Such a transition of state, however, affords but a

low and imperfect representation of that which is effected by baptism. By that sacred institution man is at once translated from one condition of relative being to another. He is transferred from a state in which he lay helpless and unpitied—in which he was exiled from all friendly intercourse or communication with those who dwell under the government of Jesus Christ, into a state in which the special favour of Jehovah is ready to be exercised towards those, who feel their need of it. In baptism he swears allegiance and vows fealty to the throne of Him, who rules supreme over the destinies of His church. In that ordinance he receives a seal, bearing the signature of the Eternal, which he is at all times entitled to employ as his passport into the court of the outward privileges of his house. He then takes his lot among those, who are by profession the peculiar people of God. He is incorporated into the commonwealth, of which Immanuel is the presiding head, and by whom all the members fitly joined together and compacted by that, “which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” He is invested with a right to all the ordinances and institutions—to all the privileges and advantages of the visible church. He has a full and unimpeachable claim to all the benefits which Jehovah hath vouchsafed unto those, who have placed themselves under the external economy of the faith. The oracles of His truth—the precepts of His law—the promises of His gospel—the illuminations of His spirit, as embodied in His word—the communion and fellow-

ship of His people—the various services of the sanctuary—the exercises of united supplication and praise with those who are assembled in his name—the participation of the affecting emblems of the Saviour's body and blood in the eucharistic banquet—the offers of pardon, peace, and reconciliation—the whole range, in short, of the means, and agencies, and instrumentalities, which Jehovah hath appointed for the purpose of bringing sinners to Himself, belong by special and covenant right to him, who has been introduced by baptism into the economy of the Christian covenant. They are his in virtue of that relation, to which he has been admitted by baptism. They are sealed and pledged unto him as the immunities and appendages of that gracious constitution under which the affairs of the everlasting covenant are administered here upon earth.

To such privileges those, who have been admitted into the church by baptism are universally entitled. But with these advantages there are connected responsibilities of the most awakening and impressive order. 'If we have been introduced into the visible church—if we have been brought within the gracious economy of the Christian covenant—if we have become by profession and federal relation subjects of the kingdom of Christ, we are called upon by every consideration of duty, consistency, and interest, to live habitually as becometh those, who belong to this privileged and exalted order of the human family. We are bound cordially and practically to accede to those terms of communion which the church hath prescribed unto those who are admitted into its bosom,

and are incorporated into membership with it. We stand pledged in the sight of God, and in the presence of his people, to submit to all the rules of the divine government—to receive and to recognize the Son of God as our king—to take His law for our directory, and His will as revealed in His word for the moving and controlling principle of our conduct. And this recognition, when carried out to its legitimate consequences and results, implies the hatred and abandonment of all sin—the love and practice of all holiness. It involves feelings of the profoundest reverence—of the most fervent and devoted attachment—of the most ardent gratitude and affection towards the Supreme—habits of the most entire and unreserved self-surrender—a train of actions, in short, gradually accumulating and consolidating into an order of character marked by whatever is pure, whatever is just, whatever is lovely, whatever is good, whatever is virtuous, whatever is really praiseworthy in the whole range of human relations and pursuits.

Connected with an introduction into the economy of the Christian covenant is the privilege of *adoption* into the Family of God. By nature the universality of the human species is in a state of estrangement from God. The bonds of the covenant, under which its two first progenitors and representatives were placed in Eden, were burst in sunder by sin. That element of disruption produced an entire change of relations between God and man. It effected a complete overthrow of that system of principles upon which Jehovah had proposed to deal with His human creatures. It

sprung a mine at the very foundation of that scheme of moral government, which the wisdom and goodness of the Eternal had instituted for the developement of the faculties, for the exercise of the affections, and for the promotion of the happiness of mankind. It threw man into a wide and apparently hopeless distance from all peaceful and friendly intercourse with his Maker. It broke up, through its disastrous influence, a vast gulph between heaven and earth, which no power short of Omnipotence guided by boundless wisdom and love could provide the means of crossing. Beyond that dreadful interval, which separates the faithful and obedient universe from the rebellious and disloyal portion of God's government, mankind was now constrained to take its position. It is on this account that all men are represented in Scripture as being by nature children of wrath—as born in a state of alienation from God—as lying under His just displeasure, and exposed to all the tremendous and complicated evils, which were involved in the original sentence of condemnation. It is on this account that a change of character and condition is indispensably necessary in order to the restoration of man to the position which he originally occupied as an object of the favour and love of God.

In the sacrament of Baptism there is a pledge given that God is now willing to effect this great and important change—there is an intimation afforded, that those who were by nature children of wrath, may now become in character and relative condition, children of grace—that they, who had gone far off, may be brought nigh—that those

whom God had hitherto been constrained, in vindication of His own character and dignity, to regard as His enemies, may now be received and recognized as His friends—that those who had before wandered as prodigals far from their Father's house, and the home of their own peace and happiness, may now return and find a cordial and welcome reception in the bosom of their Father's love. Out of the deep ruins of the fall it has from eternity been the gracious and benevolent purpose of Jehovah to raise unto Himself a family, which would be called by His name, and every member of which would be adopted into His household. This community may be considered either generally as consisting of those who have been received into outward communion with His church, or specially as confined to those, who have been really made partakers of his Spirit, and have received the seal of His love upon their hearts. Every one, who is united unto the church of God by baptism, may be said, in the language of profession and broad generalization, to be a child of God. He has certainly been taken out from the mass of unprofessing and uncovenanted humanity. He has been regularly presented to the Lord in His house, amidst the solemnities of prayer, and the appointed ceremonials of the baptismal covenant; and as the ordinance is one of God's own immediate institution, it is impossible to regard it otherwise than as a seal of adoption into His family. It is a warrant unto those, by whom it is received, that they may regard themselves as the children of God—that they are entitled to look up unto Him as their Father and their covenant God. It is a token

unto them for good—intimating that they shall no longer be frowned away from His presence with a look of threatening displeasure—that the original guilt and the inherent depravity of their nature will no longer be allowed to interpose a barrier between them and his love—but that He now welcomes them into His arms—that they are privileged to walk in and out among the members of His household—that they are entitled, through His grace, to the spiritual provisions, which are furnished at His table; to the rich and varied means, which He hath appointed for the nourishment and support of those who belong to His family. It gives them a peculiar claim to draw nigh unto God, to place their wants and their difficulties before Him—and to address Him with those feelings of reverential boldness and filial confidence, which become those, whom He hath been pleased to incorporate by baptism into the body of His church. He hath provisionally adopted them unto Himself, and He is ready to enrich them with the treasures of His house, to exert His various attributes of power, of wisdom, and of love in their behalf, and to supply all their need out of the riches of His grace in Christ Jesus. He is both able and willing to meet their exigences, to give them strength against temptation, to give them guidance and direction in perplexities, to give them light in darkness, support in weakness, comfort in distress, and a hope full of immortality amidst the manifold trials and temptations of this transitory scene. Admitted into such exalted and endearing relation unto the Most High, it were well, if they kept their relation unto Him more steadily and uniformly in view.

Then they would be no more content to vaunt themselves in the privilege of a mere outward relation to the church, and a nominal adoption into the family of God, but they would endeavour to be followers of God as becometh dear children.

But we may remark as another privilege of the same general order, which is sealed in the sacrament of baptism, that therein is afforded an *earnest* of the Spirit in his sanctifying and renewing grace. This ordinance indeed stands peculiarly connected with the influences of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of water and the baptism of the Spirit, stand in immediate juxtaposition in our Saviour's discourse addressed to Nicodemus, and no blessing of the Christian covenant does it more prominently exhibit to the view than that process of purification, which is commenced in the soul at the moment of regeneration, and is progressively carried on by the same divine Agent, that infused the original principle, until it has reached its consummation in the realms of perfect holiness and perfect happiness. We assert not that a work of grace is actually begun in every individual, who is placed by the rite of baptism under the dispensation of the Spirit. Of the influence of that Spirit we know from the highest authority, that in its immediate mode of operation it is secret and mysterious. In this respect we know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. Whether as a dormant principle—as a latent germ it may in any case be implanted in the infant mind—requiring the addition of ulterior means, and the developement of the rational and voluntary powers to be unfolded into effective action as the means of regeneration, or whether it be communi-

cated at a more advanced period in the progress of the mental faculties, it is not for us to determine. This, however, is unquestionable from the whole tenor of the scriptural statements connected with the subject, and from the analogy of the antecedent ordinance of circumcision that in baptism a pledge is given that the Spirit will be imparted in all his renewing and sanctifying influences to those who shall lay claim to the promise. In that federal transaction God must be regarded as engaging Himself to communicate in due season that, which it obviously represents. Even if we view this institution as nothing more than a mere sign, still there must be something signified, which bears a close and peculiar connection with it, otherwise the sign will be perfectly nugatory and unmeaning. We are justified, therefore, in assuming that those, who have been brought within this bond of the external form of the covenant, are persons who have had the earnest of the Spirit—persons, who are become thereby the depositories of a most important trust—persons, towards whom God has been pleased to place Himself in the relation of a debtor, and to whom He is ready, on application, to discharge the full amount of those spiritual aids and influences, to which He graciously pledged Himself at their baptism, and of which in that ordinance they received the earnest. We are justified in calling upon them to stir up the gift that is in them—to lay claim to the promises and engagements of their baptismal covenant—to appropriate to themselves the rich inheritance of regenerating, sanctifying, and transforming grace, to which they then received a title. We may remind them that

they were then admitted into the ark of Christ's church—that the celestial dove symbolically descended upon them as a pledge of its willingness to take up its permanent abode within them, and that it is still striving by every soft and gentle movement, to win its way into their hearts, in order to calm the turbid and impetuous elements of the passions, and to nestle with a soothing and tranquillizing influence in the inmost sanctuary of their affections. We may assume all these important and interesting considerations as the groundwork of an appeal to their consciences for the exercise of every holy affection, and for the manifestation in their life and conduct of all the graces of the Spirit.

In the ordinance of baptism again is sealed the comprehensive evangelical blessing of *Union* with Christ. All the privileges of the gospel are indeed inseparably combined together as embodied in human character. They form together that bundle of life, in which the soul of every believer is bound up. The great master principle of relative combination—that which exerts a plastic energy in moulding the whole and in developing and arranging every subordinate component part is doubtless union with Christ as the great head of life and influence. Of such union the sacrament of baptism was unquestionably designed to be a seal. That rite was appointed to be the special means of introducing those, who had hitherto been strangers to the covenant of promise, into an acknowledged relation unto him and a visible profession of his name. It is the badge of mutual recognition. Every one, who through the medium of this ordi-

nance has been admitted into the church, must be considered as a member, in a symbolical sense, of Christ's mystical body. He has been incorporated into that mass of aggregate humanity, which derives its principle of fellowship and communion from its professed relation unto Christ. He is therefore entitled to all the outward privileges and immunities peculiar to that order, and he is bound to the observance of all the laws and obligations which form the governing principles of the society. The very import of the Christian name is that of being thus united unto Christ. Such a designation is not an arbitrary or unmeaning title conveying no idea of character or relation. But it is a term expressive of a special union with Christ, and baptism is that initiatory rite—that authoritative and standing institution, by which men are legitimately put in possession of this sacred and significant appellation. Of those who have been thus received into the body of Christ, it may be expected and fairly demanded that they should cherish a feeling of holy and intense sympathy with the head and their fellow-members—that they should labour with vigour, constancy and zeal to perform their appropriate functions in the general economy of the system.

As crowning all other blessings we further remark that in the ordinance of baptism is sealed and conditionally pledged the *Fruition* of everlasting glory and felicity in heaven. All the rites and observances—all the promises and requisitions—all the precepts and practices of the gospel have an ultimate reference to a future world. Whatever intimation or security is given, therefore, that the present or preparatory provisions of the gospel will

be imparted, the same by implication is afforded that its final and eventual result will not be withheld. To what does that rich and diversified array of means of grace tend, which God has so bountifully provided for our spiritual necessities? To what is that bright galaxy of privileges, which encircles the firmament of the church, intended to lead? The whole is doubtless designed to illumine the path of bliss, and to lead men on their way to glory and honor and immortality. The various elements of the Christian life and character upon earth, are the pregnant principles—the undeveloped constituents of everlasting life in heaven. The church militant below is an embryo of the church triumphant above. Adoption into the family of God in the present scene of infirmity and imperfection is a pledge of closer intimacy, and of sublimer fellowship with the Father of our spirit in a future world of consummate purity and holiness. The earnest of the Spirit in the heart is but the proof of a reversionary interest beyond the grave, but a confirmation of right—a ratification of a title to the enjoyment of the purchased possession. The inheritance of the kingdom of heaven is in fact the result of a long train of previous habits and pursuits. It is the last golden link of a chain of spiritual blessings—it is the topstone of a building, the first visible foundation of which was laid in the sacrament of baptism. In whatever cases therefore the ends of that sacred institution are attained—whenever the privileges, which it seals are actually realized, there the blessedness of heaven will be the infallible consummation of the series.

These appear to be blessings and privileges, which baptism was designed to seal. To what ex-

tent, if in any measure, have they been realized in our own experience and embodied in our own character? What proof—what practical evidence can we give that we are subjects of the kingdom of Christ—that we have been admitted within the bonds of his covenant—that we have really been adopted into the family of God, and from children of wrath have been made children of grace—that we have received the earnest of the Spirit, and that his work is steadily carrying on in our souls—that we have been united unto Christ, and that in virtue of that union, we not only are free from condemnation, but also walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and lastly that we are in a condition to be heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ? These are the points of plain personal bearing and application, to which all our inquiries must tend, and all our discussions be directed. Knowledge without experience will avail us nothing. Experience without practice, were it possible, would profit us still less. Let us examine ourselves—question our own consciences solemnly and closely as in the sight of God. Let nothing turn us aside from this course of serious and deliberate self-scrutiny—remembering that we, who have been baptized in the name of Christ will, ere long, be summoned to appear before the bar of Christ, and that as we had neglected or realized the inestimable blessings sealed in the baptismal covenant He will either spurn us away from his presence as those whom He hath never known, or He will receive and welcome us into his bosom as the blessed children of his Father to inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

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CHAPTER IV.

General Obligations involved in Baptism.

The religion of Christ is distinguished from all the systems of philosophy and superstition, which several periods have prevailed in the world as a system altogether of a practical character and tenaciousness. It is not a system of vague sublimity and inaccessible grandeur—dealing only in remote abstractions and universalities, but holding no direct communion with the obligations and palpable realities of human existence. If it be true, as has been said of an illustrious philosopher of antiquity, that he brought down philosophy from heaven to earth, because he endeavoured to draw away the attention of mankind from wild and visionary speculations, and to fix their thoughts upon what was connected with the actual business and the important relations of human life, with far greater emphasis may a similar declaration be made respecting the divine and adorable founder of our religion. The gospel, indeed, is a system of principles, which touches man at every point of his intellectual and moral being. It has brought to light truths, which invite the contemplation, and will reward the exertion of the highest powers of his understanding.

It hath disclosed to view, so far as they are capable of being apprehended by the faculties of a finite nature, the attributes of the Supreme. It hath, to a considerable extent, unfolded the mysteries of his eternal councils. It hath unrolled the records of the past, and unveiled the secrets of the future. It hath discovered a new world involving destinies, compared with which the highest interests of time are but as the particles of dust, which float in the sunbeam to those vast and countless orbs, which traverse the immensity of space.

The gospel, however, does not lose amidst the grandeur of its discoveries—does not forget amidst the variety and extent of its sublimer communications—does not eclipse amidst the brightness of its prospective revelations, the most minute and subordinate details connected with the character and conduct of man in his present state of probation. No part of its disclosures or institutions, indeed, is designed to terminate in mere speculation. Every thing, how remote soever it may at first appear, to be from contact with the outward actions, is intended to have a practical bearing. Every important truth, which it hath revealed, involves a correspondent obligation on the part of man. And this is the case not only with respect to the great principles of the gospel, but also with all the rites and ceremonial observances, which it hath enjoined. It is altogether a mistake to imagine that these are so many modifications of bodily exercise, which are to pass away and to perish in the using, without exerting any permanent influence upon the conduct. Every one of them, on

the contrary, must be considered, not as a warrant of exemption from any further demand, but as a call to duty—as a channel for the conveyance of a louder and more effective appeal for the discharge of the obligations which they impose. The voice, which they utter, is a voice, which reminds us that we have a great and arduous work to perform—that we have powerful and malignant enemies to encounter—that we have temptations to resist—that we have sinful passions to mortify—that we have evil propensities to restrain—that we have a path of holiness and purity to pursue—that we have a race of strenuous activity and exertion to run—that we have a warfare to wage, and a victory to achieve, involving our everlasting peace and security—that, in short, we have a God to love and serve, and a soul eternally to save. These are duties, to which we are bound and pledged in a manner more or less direct, by every principle and institution, which belong to the gospel of Christ.

And if such be the character and tendency of the principles and ordinances of the gospel generally, such in a pre-eminent degree is the bearing of the sacred institution, which we are now considering. Baptism is a rite, externally surveyed, very simple and unpretending. It was doubtless intended generally to be performed upon infants; and unlike the other Christian sacrament, that of the Lord's supper, which was appointed to be celebrated at short and frequent intervals, it does not admit of a repetition in the case of the same individual. The reason of the difference, in this respect, may be that baptism is an initiatory rite, forming the door of admission into the visible

church, and symbolizing a change of character, which is tantamount to new birth; whereas the eucharist is a commemorative rite, shewing at every renewed celebration the Lord's death, till He comes. But although the baptismal ordinance is to be only once celebrated, and for the most part is performed upon those, who have not yet arrived at a period, which would enable them to appreciate its import, yet its influence is expected to spread over the whole of life. We have already considered the warrant of this institution as an ordinance of the Christian church—its import as a symbolical rite and the privileges sealed and pledged in it. The most interesting, and perhaps the most useful and important portion of the subject yet remains to be considered—the practical *obligations* which baptism involves. In discussing an institution of this nature, we are obliged to survey it under all its aspects, and to exhibit prominently to the view some points, which bear no immediate and direct relation to the duties of the Christian character. In examining the obligations of baptism, however, we are viewing it under that relation, which clothes it with universal interest and application. This is the most effectual means of realizing the great end of the institution—to inquire not merely upon what grounds and principles it is founded—what spiritual meaning it symbolically embodies, and what privileges it seals and pledges, but likewise to what practical duties and obligations it binds its subjects.

Among these we would first mention an unreserved *Recognition* of the fundamental principles of the gospel, as centering in the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Ghost. I reckon such an acknowledgment among the practical obligations of baptism, because I consider it to lie at the foundation of all holy and Christian practice. The recognition of the Father as the great fountain of Deity, as the Creator, the Preserver, and Supreme Ruler of all things, and the originator of the glorious scheme of man's salvation—of the Son as having readily undertaken and triumphantly accomplished, in virtue of the mysterious union of the divine and human nature in his sacred person the work of human redemption, and of the Holy Ghost as proceeding from the Father and the Son, and as applying by his grace the blessings of the gospel unto the soul, is constituted by the Saviour to be the very door of entrance into his church. Out of this firm and broad foundation of evangelical truth spring up all the extensive details and ramifications of the Christian faith. All the other articles of revealed religion are but so many corollaries necessarily flowing from these great master principles. A profession of belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as performing their respective offices in the economy of human salvation is, therefore, inscribed upon the very portals of the Christian church, and every one, who would enter into its sacred inclosure, is required to set his seal to that declaration, as expressing a correct epitome of his faith. Unfolding this brief confession, and drawing it out into those more definite and specific principles of Christian doctrine, which it involves, the church requires of the candidate for baptism a distinct avowal of his belief in all the leading articles of revealed truth. All those,

therefore, who have been received into the church through this medium, are engaged by the most solemn obligations to receive and cordially to embrace the truths of the everlasting gospel. They are bound to acknowledge with an entire and unreserved acquiescence, the great doctrines which form the foundation, and bind together in firm and beautiful harmony the superstructure of Christian faith and character—the original fall, and the consequent guilt and depravity of man—the atoning sacrifice, and the justifying righteousness of the Redeemer—the regeneration of the soul through the influences of the Holy Spirit—adoption into the family of God, and a course of progressive sanctification, which will then only be consummated, when that which is mortal has been swallowed up of life. These and other collateral principles of the Christian system they stand committed by their baptismal engagement cordially and unhesitatingly to embrace. The scheme of belief into which they have been initiated, and which they continue professedly to hold, binds them to an unequivocal recognition of all the elementary and component parts, which are essential to the completeness and efficiency of the Christian covenant. Every individual among us, who has undergone the rite of baptism, until he has openly abandoned his profession, must consider himself as pledged, in maintenance of his consistency, to receive, with the fullest assent, and the most perfect conviction the totality of the evangelical system; and this, be it observed, is no unimportant part of those practical obligations, for they are assuredly practical in their bearing and influence, which the

sacrament of baptism involves. And before we proceed a step farther, it may be proper and serviceable for us to inquire whether this preliminary department of the baptismal ordinance has yet been realized in our own character—whether we have received into our hearts the truth of the gospel in all its fulness and entireness—in all the length and breadth, the height and depth of its systematic symmetry, consistency, and beauty. Have we received that truth in the love of it? Have we used our best endeavours, in dependence on divine aid, to discover and apprehend it? Have we cast off all our prejudices, and broken down those strong holds of falsehood and error, which obstructed its entrance into our minds? Have we with the simplicity and teachableness of little children opened our understanding and our heart for its admission? Have we sought for it as for hid treasure? Have we dug for it with candour, diligence, and fervent prayer, in those mines of scriptural statement, where, like the precious ore or the sparkling diamond, it lies imbedded and concealed from heedless eyes? Does it form the most valued furniture of our mind—replenishing the whole capacity of our intellect—forming the subject of our most delightful and animating contemplations—occupying the most prominent place in our memories, and consecrating by its hallowed presence, the retired sanctuary of our thoughts? Such a reception of the truth as it is in Jesus, is unquestionably obligatory upon every man, who has taken upon him the vows of the covenant.

The knowledge of the gospel and a speculative or intellectual assent unto the gospel as true, are

not all that is required to meet the obligations which are imposed by baptism. As belonging to the same class, therefore, we would mention the *diligent use of all the appointed means of grace*, and of spiritual improvement. When we consider the variety, the extent, and the solemnity of the demands which this initiatory symbol of the Christian profession involves, when we bear in mind that it embraces within the scope of its requirements the whole range of the knowledge and the practice of true religion, so far as it is necessary that it should be embodied in the character, we must readily acknowledge that no ordinary or languid efforts will avail to rise to a level with the duties which it entails. If it be an easy thing to be an experimental, practical, and consistent Christian—if it be the spontaneous and unaided result of the inherent tendencies and susceptibilities of the human mind to know, to believe, to do, and to abstain from doing, all that is enjoined or all that is forbidden in the record of the divine will, then may we be exempted from the necessity of a careful and diligent use of all the means, which divine wisdom and goodness have instituted for the communication of such additional light and influence as may be needful to render the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. But the very fact of our having undertaken in our baptismal covenant so much more than we are naturally able or willing to perform, and of our having been engaged to responsibilities so far surpassing the reach of our own unaided faculties, renders it obligatory upon us to avail ourselves of all those channels and instruments of divine appointment,

through which the requisite assistance may be conveyed. As we are solemnly bound to realize certain ends of spiritual knowledge, affection, and and habitual practice, we are doubtless bound by equal obligation to the conscientious and unre-mitted use of the means, by which alone they can be attained. And among these, with special reference to the illumination of the understanding, and the direction of the judgment upon the great principles of the Christian faith, the study of the Scriptures must be considered as occupying a prominent place. The man who has been admitted into the family of God by the door of baptism, and yet habitually neglects to look into the book of God, which was designed to be the directory and guide, the lamp for the feet, and the spring of spiritual refreshment and consolation to all the members of that household, acts in the same manner as the child who would never condescend to look into a code of instruction, admonition, and encouragement, which his father had drawn up for his benefit. The Bible is the great statute-book of the church of God, containing a complete and authentic developement of those mighty principles of holiness, righteousness, and goodness, which constitute the pillars of the divine government. It is one of the most stupendous and lasting monuments of Jehovah's love towards mankind. It is a record inscribed by the pen of his Eternal Spirit, and the great doctrines, which it teaches and inculcates will continue to be in force, when the vast volume of heaven and earth, whose every page is so richly emblazoned with the manifestations of his power, and wisdom, and benevo-

lence will have been wrapped up and have passed away like a scroll. This inestimable treasury of truth, this standing memorial of the mind of Jehovah, it is our paramount duty as professing Christians, diligently and constantly to search. It is the book of knowledge, to which we must have recourse for light in darkness, and for guidance in perplexity. It is the book of principles, from which we must learn to draw forth rules for the regulation of our conduct through all the varying scenes of life. It is the book of facts, which brings most impressively before our view the whole history of God's dealings with his people; and above all it is the book, which testifies of Christ and his salvation, and on this ground alone it ought to be precious in the eyes, and dear to the affections of all who are called by his name.

To render the study of the scriptures effectual, however, for those purposes of instruction and edification, which they were designed to answer, it is necessary that it should be combined with fervent and devout prayer. It is the influence of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed in answer to prayer, which impregnates the letter of Scripture with a quickening and life-giving energy. To one, who has been adopted, by covenant engagement, into the family of God, and bears by external profession the relation of a child towards Him, the exercise of prayer in all its forms of supplication or thanksgiving ought to be considered a natural and congenial employ. It is the most direct medium of intercourse with his Father, who is in heaven. It is the incense, which ascends in most grateful odour to the throne above, and descends from

thence in most rich and copious supplies of grace and strength. It rises up in a glow of ardent gratitude and affection, and revisits the bosom from which it issued, as a gale from the celestial paradise, with fragrance and healing on its wings ; so that even if it should fail to be recognized as a duty, it may still be regarded as a rich and inestimable privilege.

Nor does the obligation rest in these more retired exercises. With the habits of waiting upon God, and seeking his blessing through the medium of his written word, and of private prayer must be associated a regular and devout attendance upon the public duties of the sanctuary. It is one of the specific charges laid by the church on those, who enter upon the responsible office of a sponsor, that they shall call upon those, for whom they answer to hear sermons, and see that they learn the great rudiments of Christian faith and practice as epitomized in the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments, in order, as we are told, that they may know and believe all things, which Christians ought to know and believe for their soul's health. What is, therefore, to be thought of those persons, who so completely forget the covenant engagement made in their behalf, that they habitually and uniformly neglect every one of these means ; who know not what it is to read the Scriptures—to pray, nor with any regularity and seriousness of purpose and deportment, to repair unto the house of the Lord in order to meet Him in the high places of his sanctuary ? Such persons obviously forget the profession which they have made, and set at nought the means

which Jehovah in his boundless compassion hath established for the express purpose of affording them the aid of which they stand in need.

In religion every thing must tend to practice, and if the sacrament of baptism imposes an obligation to make an entire and unreserved recognition of the fundamental principles of the Christian faith, and to make a diligent and conscientious use of all the means of grace, it is with a view of leading to a great practical result. We remark, therefore, that the practical obligations of baptism embrace an entire *Renunciation* of the world in all its *pomps and vanities*. This, indeed, is one of the most prominent and palpable of all the vows and engagements of that covenant. The world in its present state of almost universal rebellion against God, forms an interest embracing a numberless variety of objects, totally at variance with his service. He who would faithfully and zealously devote himself unto God, therefore, must come to a firm and unequivocal decision to renounce the world. Simultaneously to serve both is utterly impossible. He that would be a cordial and effective friend of the one, must inevitably be an enemy of the other. The course of conduct which they respectively prescribe, is so diametrically opposite, that it is impossible to evince a practical attachment to the one, without a proportionate abandonment of the claims of the other. The world, in the theological sense of the term, and as expressive of that complex mass of feelings, habits, and pursuits, which characterize those, who live only for present interests and enjoyments, is invariably represented in Scripture as set in hostile array

against the church. So decidedly and unequivocally is this the case, that St. John does not hesitate to affirm, that the love of the world is absolutely incompatible with the love of God. It is not without reason, therefore, that the church requires of those, who are admitted into union with it by baptism, a virtual pledge, and if they have arrived at years of discretion, an actual pledge, that they will renounce the vain pomp and glory of a world that lieth in wickedness. Hence the symbol of the cross, which was inscribed at the baptismal font upon the brow of the professed Christian, is a standard lifted up by the Spirit of the Lord against that flood of ungodliness and sin, with which the world is impetuously carried forward to destruction.

Let me ask my readers, and in the course of this discussion I have been frequently led to urge appeals of this description to their consciences—let me ask them how far this momentous and comprehensive obligation has been practically recognized in their own character and conduct. You have vowed in the presence of God, and amidst the solemnities of the sanctuary, that you would renounce and abjure the principles, the maxims, and the prevailing practices of this evil world? Have you ever yet commenced, and in any degree realized the actual recognition of these engagements? Have you ever yet cast off the yoke of allegiance to the authority of worldly custom and example? When you have seen a multitude running to do evil, have you recollected those bonds of the covenant, to which you are pledged, or have you allowed yourselves to be dragged along by the im-

petus of the muddy and polluted torrent, which bore onward by its force so many willing and deluded votaries? I would descend to the several gradations of worldly sports and amusements—to the varied shades of that dark colouring, which in the view of the Christian, and in the light of Scripture, still rests upon the face of secular society. I would refer to the sabbath excursions and convivialities—to the amusements of the theatre, the race-course, and the gaming-table, and the innumerable train of evils, some of them of the darkest and most malignant kind, which every man of reason and reflection readily acknowledges to be closely associated with them; and I would ask you, how your conduct has hitherto stood in relation to some of these. To bring forward the practice of the world as sanctioning these habits, is at once to confess yourselves to be subject to an influence, and to be in league with an enemy, which you are solemnly engaged to renounce. Unless declarations made, and vows pledged at your introduction into the fellowship of the church be words without meaning, and engagements without corresponding obligations, you are unquestionably bound to relinquish every principle, every maxim, every pursuit, which is palpably at variance with the spirit and practical bearing of the covenant, which received in the symbol of the cross the seal of its ratification at your baptism. It was to deliver us from this evil world, as the apostle emphatically expresses it, that Christ gave Himself for our sins. And this object will be realized only in proportion as, in fulfilment of our baptismal vows, we are enabled to cast off the pomps and vanities, as well

as the grosser abominations, and the more direct impieties of that world.

And this leads me to remark as another practical obligation connected with the ordinance of baptism, that it imperatively requires the crucifixion of the flesh in its *affections* and *lusts*. So far as any propensities of our nature in the mode, or the measure, or the circumstances of their indulgence are manifestly inconsistent with the will of God, and hostile to our spiritual interests, we stand pledged to God and to the church, as invested with the responsibilities and external privileges of the christian profession, unequivocally to renounce them. They are the lusts of the flesh, which in the present fallen and disordered condition of our nature the Apostle specifically declares to war against the soul. An essential part of the very import of baptism as a sacramental emblem, as has been already shewn, is to afford a symbolical exhibition of a death unto sin and of a resurrection unto a life of holiness and righteousness; and the practical obligations of the ordinance must doubtless run parallel with its typical design. Viewed in this light baptism in fact brings its subject within the range of all the demands of the gospel, and of all the requisitions and prohibitions of the moral law. It spreads its claims over the whole man in all the principles, affections and habits of his intellectual and moral being. It requires him, and so far as he is consistent, it binds him to mortify the old man of corrupt nature in every element of his power—influence and affection—to nail unto the cross of Christ every sinful propensity—every carnal desire and every corrupt tendency,

and to bring every thought as the source of feeling and action into captivity to the obedience of Him.

And with this and indeed as forming an essential part of this process of crucifying the flesh must be combined a course of strenuous activity in doing the will and in promoting the glory of God. Our christian profession is identified in our baptismal service, with following the example of our Saviour Christ; and as his life was one unbroken series of acts of combined piety and benevolence—acts incorporating in the most striking and impressive form, the principles of the most fervent devotion—the sublimest purity and the most perfect and extensive beneficence, those, who have been baptised in his name are unquestionably required habitually to labour to tread in his steps, and to abound in those fruits of holiness and brotherly kindness, which are equally conducive to the illustration of the glory of God and to the advancement of the happiness of man. To follow the example of Christ, to keep God's holy will and commandments as they were kept in his spotless and unsullied life, to regard every faculty and affection as sacred unto Him—to consider every opportunity as well as every endowment as a talent put in trust for his service, to present, in short, the whole man including all the powers of body and mind, and emerging in all the freshness, purity and energy of regenerated nature as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto Him—these are the highest triumphs of Christian principle—these are the noblest and most perfect attainments of the believer here below. And these are all, doubtless,

virtually included in the extensive range of the obligations of the baptismal covenant.

Lastly it is to be observed that the initiatory rite of baptism involves a solemn obligation to ratify the covenant then made, by a regular and faithful attendance upon the confirmatory rite of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. These two institutions have a natural connection in the economy of the christian covenant. He, who has been made partaker of the first becomes thereby federally entitled to the benefits of the second. And he, who disqualifies himself by his impenitence, unbelief and impiety for participating of the symbols of the body and blood of Christ, or neglects it through heedlessness and indifference, virtually forfeits the privileges, wherewith he was invested at his baptism. The one was designed to be a preparation and introduction into the mysteries of the other. The symbol of baptism was affixed to the forehead in infancy; it is left to mature years to determine whether it shall be ratified and sealed in blood, or whether it shall be abandoned to be utterly obliterated and effaced through forgetfulness and neglect. The sacrament of the Lord's supper, affords a delightful recognition of the validity and importance of that of baptism, and united together they form most instructive and significant emblems of that mingled stream of water and blood, which issued forth with cleansing and atoning efficacy from the Redeemer's wounded side.

These I consider to be the leading practical obligations involved in baptism. And well, indeed, may we exclaim in the view of them, who is

sufficient for these things? But let them be surveyed in connection with the privileges which are pledged in the same ordinance, with those gracious engagements of spiritual help and strength, which enter into the very essence of the institution; and they will no longer appear impracticable. The ordinance will then be seen in all the beauty, harmony, and proportion of its spiritual bearing as a divine appointment. It will then appear to be based upon the authority of God—to be a depository of most important and varied truth—to be a seal of privileges and spiritual advantages of the highest order, and to be a law of practical obligation—a rule of conduct embracing within its extensive range the whole field of the Christian character and conduct. Let it thus be realized in our perceptions, and incorporated into our character—let us learn thus to appreciate its benefits, and to exemplify its obligations; and then, instead of a lifeless and unmeaning ceremony, it will become unto us a living Epistle of Christ, bearing, inscribed in indelible characters, our title to an imperishable inheritance.

PART FOURTH.

THE

ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

CHAPTER I.

The Design of the Lord's Supper.

THERE is something peculiarly sacred in the commands of a dying friend. Under such circumstances every communication of thought or desire is invested with a solemnity—every intimation comes with a weight—every expression is watched with a solicitude—every accent is caught with an eagerness, which in most cases are found to enter into the deepest recesses of the mind, and to leave an indelible impression upon the heart. The injunctions and admonitions, which, coming from one in the enjoyment of health, and in the prospect of a long succession of future opportunities, might have been treated with indifference and contempt, when uttered by the lips of one, who is seen to be on the point of taking his final leave of earth, are associated in the mind with an authority and a majesty,

which it is deemed almost impious to disregard. Both parties are then in a condition most favorable for the production of the desired effect—the one to impart, the other to receive instruction or reproof. The directions then given seem to be addressed by an inhabitant of another world, and to bear something of the character and solemnity of a voice issuing from the tomb. To neglect them, to treat them with levity and unconcern, is unavoidably felt to be a violation offered to the dead. The last wish, which trembled upon the lips, or was faintly breathed by the parting spirit of a relative or friend, is treasured up with a care and a tenderness in the inmost sanctuary of the heart, and is dwelt upon with a fondness of pensive and melancholy recollection, which cause the observance of it to the utmost practicable extent to be felt as one of the first and most sacred duties of life. To a mind under due regulation and control, and possessed of the ordinary sympathies of humanity, it would assuredly be no trifling sacrifice, no subordinate consideration, which would justify the neglect of such an injunction.

And if such a command uttered by one, who is about to yield up his spirit in obedience to the universal law of nature, and without any view to the benefit of those, whom he addresses, be attended with an authority and a power of obligation, which few would be found lightly to disregard, with how much greater force and impressiveness must it come from Him, who was about to surrender his life for the deliverance, and from a pure and disinterested love, of those, whom He requested to keep up such a memorial of his sacrifice. If

dying wishes, even where there was no absolute right to command, and no positive obligation to obey, be in general held so sacred and binding by those to whom they were expressed, with what scrupulous regard—with what affectionate gratitude and veneration ought His last injunction to be observed by his friends and professed followers, whose claims upon their remembrance were so paramount and affecting. “Do this in remembrance of me,” was the brief direction addressed by our blessed Saviour to his disciples, as he partook of his last supper with them just before his crucifixion. In this pathetic appeal He directs them, and in them his followers to the end of time, to retain a memorial of that painful and ignominious death, which He was so speedily to undergo, by partaking, at stated periods, of bread and wine as the specific emblems of his body and blood. With that woeful tragedy, of which He was so soon to be the subject, vividly depicted to his eye—with a spirit torn and overwhelmed with the most agonizing conflicts—with a heart overflowing with the tenderest sympathy, and his countenance beaming with the purest benignity and loving kindness, He enjoins it upon them as his last request—“Do this in remembrance of me.”

This was the form of institution, in which the ordinance of the Lord's supper was established; and in compliance with this specific command the church of Christ at first adopted, and has continued at suitable intervals to celebrate, this holy rite for eighteen centuries. In our own division of that church, the observance of this affecting ceremony is an essential part of her discipline, nor does she

recognize as her accredited members those, who having arrived at years of maturity, and with suitable opportunities within their reach, do not ratify their profession, by this additional seal of the Christian covenant. In her earliest and best days it is recorded, that the ordinance of the Lord's supper was administered every successive sabbath within her walls.⁽¹⁷⁾ Her anxiety that her members should not neglect and disobey this affecting command of their dying master, is amply testified in that simple, fervent, and truly devotional appeal, which she has directed her ministers to read whenever the celebration of the ordinance is announced.

We would not, however, by any means urge men heedlessly and indiscriminately to rush into these sacred mysteries. We would not invite any profane—any impenitent—any unbelieving—any unholy person to put forth an unhallowed hand to touch these symbols of the covenant. The eucharist is evidently an ordinance intended exclusively for believers, and while it affords every encouragement to the timid, the sincere, and the consistent professor of the Christian faith, it warns the rash, the inconsiderate, the self-righteous, and above all, the practically impious and immoral, that they presume not in that state to appear at this celestial banquet, as they would not aggravate their present guilt, and expose themselves to a more overwhelming visitation of penal vengeance. With a view, therefore, of affording such as may not have hitherto seriously considered this important subject, the means of forming a correct judgment of its nature and character I propose to con-

sider—first, The *Design* of this Ordinance—secondly, Its universal *Obligation* as binding upon professing Christians—thirdly, The *Preparation* necessary for its due and suitable reception—and fourthly, The *Benefits* calculated to result from it unto those, by whom it is worthily received. The present chapter will be devoted to the first of these points.

I deem it the more necessary to inquire into the *Design* of this sacrament as originally instituted by the gracious Author and Founder of our religion, as there is doubtless much ignorance and misapprehension prevalent in the world upon this part of the subject. Many persons imagine that the ordinance of the Lord's supper was appointed, not as a means of grace generally, and the efficacy of which was to be entirely dependent upon the faith and the other necessary qualifications of him, who partook of it, but as a direct instrument of salvation, as some mysterious charm attended with a species of talismanic power, which seldom or never failed to accompany it. Hence in the darker ages of the church, when the lamp of scriptural and evangelical truth shone but faintly and dimly through the gloom, it was perverted to the basest and most pernicious purposes of a corrupt and degrading superstition.⁽¹⁸⁾ In connection with the sacrament of baptism, it came to be regarded as a secure pledge of salvation. It was, therefore, very frequently put off, as indeed in too many instances is still the case, to the closing scene of life; and then it was received, sometimes after the functions of physical and intellectual nature had almost entirely ceased, as an adequate atonement

for all past transgressions, and, in the impious phraseology of the times, as the viaticum, the travelling provisions, by the strength of which the soul was to be sustained in its journey from earth to heaven. And although the same language and the same practice do not now prevail in all the grossness of ignorant and avowed expectation, yet it may well be a matter of serious and devout consideration, whether the spirit of that fatal delusion be not still abroad among ourselves to a most grievous and melancholy extent. It is a fact too obvious and notorious to require any specific proof that those, who have been accustomed habitually to neglect, and perhaps have never received this memorial of a Saviour's love, when the hour of dissolution appears to draw nigh, are frequently anxious to partake of it, and leave no room to doubt that they secretly regard it as possessed of some expiatory and saving virtue. Thus the sacrament, instead of being used as a symbol to direct the mind to Him, whose dying love it so strikingly exhibits, becomes the occasion of turning the eyes away from Him, and concentrating the attention upon itself as virtually superseding the need of Him. We mean not to intimate that the celebration of this sacred rite, in the prospect of speedy dissolution, is not in the highest degree suitable in itself, and, if mixed with faith and love in the reception, calculated to afford the purest and most exalted consolation. It is only when it is viewed in the light of an atonement, and received without an adequate preparation of the heart as a passport into eternal glory, that it becomes a source of dangerous error and delusion.

And if such be the misapprehensions, which are widely diffused respecting this important question, it becomes of the utmost consequence that we should entertain correct notions of its primary purpose and design. In illustration of this point we proceed to remark, therefore, that it was instituted by our adorable Redeemer, as a *Seal* of the Christian covenant. In this respect it occupies a place perfectly analogous to that of baptism in the great economy of our salvation. Every compact between two parties must have some sign—some external and ostensible ceremony of ratification, in order to render it valid and efficacious. In entering into any federal arrangement, there are facts recognized, there are obligations incurred, there are pledges given, without which the whole scheme would be nugatory. Thus in the gracious covenant, which Jehovah hath made with his people, there are certain seals appointed, which He deemed necessary to give it force, and in receiving these they may be considered as executing that deed, by which they pledge themselves to the observance of all the demands and requisitions of the treaty.

In the sacrament of the Lord's supper there is an admirable suitableness and congruity to answer these important purposes. In celebrating it there is a direct and unreserved acknowledgment on the part of man, that he is a poor and miserable sinner. There is an evident recognition of the guilt, in which he is involved, of the danger to which he is exposed, and of the consequent necessity of fleeing for refuge unto the hope set before him. There is moreover, implied in it a cordial belief

of the efficacy of the blood of Christ—of the adequacy of his atonement—of the perfection of his righteousness—of the completeness of the salvation wrought out by Him—and of the availing power of his intercession. The sacrament, when viewed in this light, instead of being a barren and formal ceremony, becomes instinct with life, with truth, and with hope. Instead of a mere combination of lifeless and material elements, it becomes a system of vital doctrines—an epitome of the gospel—a condensed summary of the stipulations and provisions of the everlasting covenant—a symbolic representation of the great principles of equity, loving kindness, and compassion upon which man is to be restored into his Maker's favour and peace—an autograph of the Most High, in which are traced in characters formed with a Saviour's blood the terms, upon which sin may be forgiven, and the soul everlastingly saved.

In this holy institution there is a striking and impressive exhibition of the various blessings and privileges of the Christian covenant. It confirms, on the part of Jehovah, the gracious character of the gospel as a saving scheme. It brings to view, in all its transcendent glory and excellency, the benignity of that scheme as originating in the counsels of eternity, and as involving the surrender and voluntary sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God. It displays in a most interesting and engaging point of view, the sublime attributes of Deity, as combined together in its formation and accomplishment—the compassion which suggested it—the wisdom which devised it—the faithfulness which unalterably maintained its purpose, and the

power which carried it into effect. It exhibits in a most marvellous and exhilarating light, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in so readily entering into the views of divine mercy, and in so cheerfully engaging in a scheme, which involved such unexampled humiliation, suffering, and self-denial. It expresses in a figure of the most significant and comprehensive import, the incalculable treasures of divine grace. It brings to view the most prominent and important of those riches of Christ, which in their full and entire amount are unsearchable. It gives some faint idea of the length and breadth—the height and depth of that love, which passeth knowledge. It unfolds to the eye of faith the bright muster-roll of its privileges, as ratified by the blood of the covenant. It causes to converge into a focus of more than ordinary intensity, the sun-beams of everlasting love, as collected in the person of a crucified Redeemer, and thus pledges the inviolable truth of those promises, which in Christ are yea and amen unto all them that believe.

Besides, however, that the ordinance of the Lord's supper seals the blessings of the covenant on the part of God, and confirms the title of believers to the enjoyment of its saving provisions, it also brings into the clearest light, and affords a virtual acknowledgment of the state of man as a sinner, and his obligations as a professing Christian. In this sacred rite there is a direct confession on the part of man, that he is a fallen and guilty creature—that he has sinned, and come short of the glory of God—that he stands condemned by the holy law of God—that of himself

he is utterly unable to offer it any adequate satisfaction—that he is therefore desirous of fleeing unto Jesus as the only hope set before him—of being washed in the fountain of his blood, and of being clothed in his spotless righteousness. He sets his seal to that covenant, by the tenor of which he stands pledged to surrender himself unto God as one, who is alive from the dead—as one who has been bought with the inestimable price of the blood of Christ—as one, who is no longer to live unto himself, but unto Him that died for him and rose again. At every renewed participation of these sacred symbols of the covenant he takes, as it were, a fresh oath—he adds a fresh signature to the instrument by which he is bound to yield himself unto God, to obey his laws, to do his will, and to serve Him faithfully in the gospel of his Son. Thus it is that the sacrament is a *Seal* of the Christian covenant—affording an outward pledge and confirmation of the divine promises of pardon, peace, and salvation, through the blood of Christ, as the true paschal lamb of his church, and binding the believer to a cheerful and unreserved compliance with all the obligations and requisitions of the same covenant.

Independently, however, of the general design of this holy institution, it was doubtless intended specifically to afford an *Emblematic* representation of the body and blood of Christ. It is, indeed, an invariable characteristic of a sacrament, that it should bear a close analogy to the thing, which it is intended to exhibit—that the outward and visible sign should naturally lead the mind to the consideration of the inward and spiritual grace.

In the sacrament of baptism, for example, the external washing of water bears an evident and most appropriate reference to that internal ablution through the influences of the Holy Spirit, in virtue of which the soul is purified from those moral defilements, with which it has become so deeply stained by sin. In the same manner the bread and wine, which form the material elements of the other sacrament, are obviously designed to symbolize the two leading constituents of that body, which was offered up on the cross for the salvation of mankind. In the very distribution of the sacramental emblems, indeed, our blessed Saviour Himself most forcibly expressed and established this representative connection, declaring in the language of bold and striking metaphor, as he brake and dispensed the bread—"this is my body, which is broken for you;" and as He took the cup, "this is my blood;" or as the apostle slightly varies the phraseology, "this cup is the New Testament in my blood." In other words, the wine contained in this cup affords a lively and impressive representation of that blood, by which the new testament or covenant is to be ratified. So strong, indeed, is the figure here employed, and so close is the analogy between the emblems, and the objects intended to be represented by them, that the church of Rome has founded and upholds one of the most preposterous and irrational of all its heresies—the transmutation of the bread and wine into the real body and blood of the Saviour, upon the literal interpretation of this language. Such an application of the terms, however, is not less at variance with Scripture, than it

is contrary to the most obvious dictates of reason. It is not less false in religion, than it is absurd in philosophy.

The sacramental symbols are indeed designed, and are most eminently calculated to bring vividly before the mind the tragical process of the crucifixion of our blessed Saviour. The substance of the consecrated elements of bread and wine represents his flesh and blood. The breaking of the former, was intended to exhibit the lacerations of his sacred body, and the effusion of the latter, represents with equal propriety and force, the shedding of his most precious blood. In this, therefore, above any other ordinance of religion, the Lord Jesus is set forth evidently as crucified among us. In this it was originally intended that believers should innocently crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh, by contemplating his body and blood through the medium of their symbolic representations; that their hearts might thus become more deeply impressed with the view of his agony upon the cross.

Another consideration included in the general design of this sacred institution was, that it might remain to the end of time, an affecting *Remembrancer* of the Saviour's dying love. Viewed in this light there is something peculiarly appropriate and touching to the heart in this divine ceremonial. The adorable Saviour was now seated with his disciples at a banquet of holy love. They were celebrating the feast of the passover—a feast commemorative of the effusion of that blood of the lamb; which being sprinkled over the door posts of their houses, protected the Israelites from the

ravages of the destroying angel. In the immediate prospect of the shedding of his own blood as a ransom for many, the Redeemer took that opportunity of establishing a similar institution as a distinguishing characteristic of his church and people, for the purpose of keeping in everlasting remembrance that scene of bitter agony and death, upon which he was now about to enter. He was desirous that an event so deeply affecting his own person, so strikingly illustrative of his compassion and love, and so interesting and important in its bearing upon the deliverance and salvation of mankind, should not be merely recorded in his church as a matter of history. He was anxious that it should not merely be handed down from age to age by traditionary communication, or stand inscribed among the historical facts of revelation; but He wished it to be embodied in something, which was more palpable and affecting—something which would more forcibly and directly appeal to the sensitive part of our nature—something which would afford a greater security of a frequent and exclusive direction of the thoughts and feelings of his people to the scene of his dying love. He therefore commanded them to keep in memory that his precious death, until his coming again by the periodical observance of a sacred feast, such as they were then celebrating, and through the medium of those elements of bread and wine, which He was then dispensing. While the hearts of his disciples were now warmed with the glowing sympathies of social intercourse and reverential affection, He addressed them in language of inimitable simplicity and pathos—“Do this in remembrance of

me." "It is the last time that I shall have an opportunity of partaking with you of this fruit of the vine, before I drink of that cup of suffering, which is before me. My hour is rapidly drawing near. Soon the body, which is now before you will be broken, its temples will be lacerated with the thorny crown, its side will be laid open with the spear, its hands and its feet will be pierced and nailed to the tree. Soon the vital current, which now runs through my veins and warms my heart in love and affection towards you, will be streaming over the cross, being shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. But I have one request to make of you—I have one last and solemn injunction to urge upon you—Do this in remembrance of me. Let this simple token of affectionate recollection never cease to distinguish those, who call themselves by my name. Let this be a standing memorial of my death, and a pledge of brotherly kindness and mutual sympathy among my followers throughout the remotest annals of my church."

Such appear to have been the general design, and the specific objects of the original institution of the Lord's Supper. It was not intended to promote by any inherent efficacy, by any meritorious influence the work of human salvation. It was not appointed to supersede any of the inward principles and graces, or of the practical evidences of the christian character. It was not a passport signed by the hand of eternal truth, and authenticated with the seal of the promise to secure a safe conduct from earth to heaven, to those, who throughout the whole of life had travelled along the way

that leadeth unto hell. The sacrament in itself is possessed of no such virtue or efficacy. But it was designed to be a seal of the christian covenant—to pledge the fulfilment of its promises to those who have been brought within its terms, and to be the medium, through which the believer may bind himself to an entire self-surrender unto God. It was designed to afford a striking emblematic representation of the body and blood of Christ; and lastly it was intended to be an affecting remembrancer of the Redeemer's dying love.

And let me ask whether these be not objects sufficiently important, in connection with the authority, by which the observance is enjoined, to secure the cheerful and devout compliance of those, who call themselves by the name of Christ. Upon what ground do we expect to inherit the blessings of the Christian covenant, if we habitually refuse to receive its seals? On what principle can we hope to be pardoned through the atoning death, and to be cleansed through the blood of Christ, if we turn away with contempt from those emblems, by which they are so vividly represented? What evidence can we have that the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts, and constraineth us, if we do not cherish and maintain an affectionate and grateful remembrance of Him, through the ordinance which He Himself hath instituted for that express and specific purpose? Let us lay these considerations seriously to heart, and answer to our own conscience, whether our conduct, in reference to this subject, has hitherto been such as to enable us to look forward with confidence to meet the face of our judge. While, as a mere mecha-

nical operation—as an act of formal and lifeless service, the sacrament will profit us nothing, yet as an expression of the divine will, as an appointment of Christ Himself, as a remembrancer of his dying love, it is in the highest degree necessary and important. Under these considerations it is an institution full of joy and consolation—of encouragement and of hope, and its worthy celebration may justly be considered as an antepast of those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore.

CHAPTER II.

The Universal Obligation of the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

IN the character of the Christian, duty and privilege are delightfully blended together. They are, indeed, so combined in the views of the understanding and the feelings of the heart, as to become almost entirely identified in their influence, and to cease to be regarded as distinct principles of conduct. The mind of the believer has been so moulded into a conformity with the will of God—his tastes and predilections have been so thoroughly assimilated to the moral attributes of God—and his general habits have been brought into such complete accord with the law and government of God—his predominant desires have been reduced into such a cheerful and unreserved acquiescence in all the injunctions and demands of God, that the sense of duty, however just and legitimate in itself, is lost in the sublimer and more animating impression of its being a privilege. Duty, though it does not cease to bind, is not regarded so much in the light of a compulsory service, as the homage of a grateful heart, which delights in having an opportunity to testify the depth and sincerity of its emotions. To the true Christian the very restraint enjoined by the divine law is freedom of the purest and most exalted order.

Instead of confining him to a train of habits and pursuits, which are ungenial to his nature, the gospel, in the various ceremonies, which it hath instituted—the means of grace which it hath appointed, and in the devotional exercises, as well as practical duties, which it enforces, only affords an opportunity for his affections more freely to expand themselves, and for his activities to be more vigorously put forth. The labour, the self-denial, and the unreserved surrender of himself unto God, which it inculcates are, in fact, but a practical development of the principle, which exerts the most powerful and commanding influence on his character.

But of all the departments of the Christian character and conduct, there is no one, in which duty and privilege more perfectly meet and harmonize together, than that to which our attention is to be now directed. In the last chapter I endeavoured to rescue the ordinance of the Lord's supper from the abuse, to which it has been perverted by superstition, and from those purposes of ignorance and delusive expectation, to which it is still so frequently applied. We now proceed to consider the obligation of the sacrament, as a divine and positive institution, and as a distinctive badge of the Christian profession.

When we speak of the obligatory character of this ordinance, the expression is doubtless to be limited to real christians. This is one of those privileges of the church, to which in its spiritual import, and as involving spiritual blessings and qualifications, believers alone are entitled. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is not a mere ex-

ternal observance, expressive of a voluntary assumption of the christian name. It is not one of those means of grace, which are designed for the indiscriminate use and benefit of all, who may be brought within their reach, and to serve as channels of communication for the primary influences of the divine Spirit unto the soul. This is not a service of the outer court of the temple, to which the whole mass of professed worshippers are alike admissible. But it belongs to the inner sanctuary, to the holy of holies, into which none but those, who have been consecrated unto the Lord, and have been sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, are allowed to enter. It is a rite peculiarly expressive of that close communion—of that intimate fellowship, which subsists between Christ and his people, and of that bond of spiritual brotherhood, by which they are mutually united unto each other; and while it is left to the conscience of each individual to determine, under such limitations as the evidences of his practical character and conduct may establish, whether he be in a condition to partake of this sacred mystery, it obviously belongs as a privilege to those only, who have been really incorporated into the body of Christ.

But although the sacrament in its direct and specific intention, is binding only upon real Christians, let none upon that account imagine that they are free from guilt, while they live in the neglect of it. Many persons there are, who allow themselves to think that, because their character and habits are avowedly such as render them unfit recipients of this holy ordinance, it is in them perfectly innocent, if it be not a species of merit to

abstain from it. It is true, indeed, that to partake of it in an unworthy and unsuitable state of character would plunge them deeper in guilt, and make an additional item to the catalogue of their transgressions. But they forget that the very fact of their unfitness proclaims aloud the degeneracy of their character, and the peril of their condition. They do not reflect that want of meetness is no excuse for noncompliance with an express command—that one order of defects does not make up for another—that the sin of not being duly prepared does not neutralize, much less elevate into a virtue, the sin of disobedience to the last injunction of their dying Lord and master. They consider not that the very circumstance of their being unworthy to appear at this heavenly banquet calls upon them with so much greater urgency to make their peace, and effect their reconciliation with God—to go to that fountain, which was opened for sin and for uncleanness—to seek the wedding garment of personal holiness and righteousness, that they may be thus meet partakers of those holy mysteries. If it be the duty of all real Christians, as we propose to shew, and of such only in their present condition, to approach the table of the Lord, in order to seal their covenant with God with the impress of this holy rite, by so much the more forcibly does it call upon men to become real Christians. As long as they know and acknowledge that they are utterly unfit for this sublime duty and privilege of the children of God, they know and virtually acknowledge, that they are still in a state of enmity with God—that they lie under his wrath—that they are under a sentence of

condemnation—that they are in hourly peril of being cast into hell, and of being everlastingly excluded from the divine presence. They acknowledge that they are in a condition, which involves every thing which is spiritually forlorn and destitute—every thing that is awful and terrific in the unextinguishable wrath of God, and through the utmost range of eternity. The very consideration of their feeling themselves to be justly debarred from this medium of affectionate communication with God is a clear and unequivocal intimation of the perilous position, in which they are placed. It surely proves no ordinary delinquency attaching itself to the character of a child, that he should find it necessary to shrink from his father's countenance—that he should not presume to seat himself at his father's table. Precisely similar to this is the predicament of those persons, who are gone to such a distance, and are in such a state of alienation from God, as to place them out of the range of that dutiful homage, in which their gratitude and affection should have delighted to manifest themselves. Let us not suffer ourselves, therefore, to be imposed upon by the delusive fallacy, that because we may be in an unprepared state, we therefore incur no guilt or blame by our habitual neglect and disregard of that celestial feast, which we are called upon to celebrate. We may be assured, that if we are unfit for this sacred rite, then we are unfit for death—unfit for the judgment—unfit for heaven, and fit only to be “destroyed with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

Having offered these few explanatory remarks, I proceed to observe, that to the sacrament of the Lord's supper there attaches the obligation of obedience to an *Express Command*. An attendance upon this holy ordinance, where suitable opportunities present themselves, is not one of those duties, which have been enjoined in terms so dubious and indefinite, as to render it uncertain, and in some degree, to leave it to the discretion of individuals to determine, to what extent and under what circumstances they are binding. Here, on the contrary, the direction is unequivocal, peremptory, and decisive—"Do this in remembrance of me." In the distribution of one of the consecrated elements, the Saviour exclaimed, "Take, eat; this is my body," and in dispensing the other, in language still more comprehensive and express, "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"—a command, the universality of which would seem to have been specifically designed as well to reprove the indifference of those, who totally neglect this ordinance, as to expose the futility and impiety of that daring superstition, which has presumed to limit the privilege of the great mass of Christian believers to one portion of the eucharistic banquet. From this form of expression attending the original and authoritative institution of this ordinance, it obviously appears that to approach the table of the Lord at suitable and appropriate seasons, is not only a privilege of exalted order, to which true believers are entitled—is not only a means of confirming and establishing the various principles and graces of their Christian

character, which they are allowed to use—is not only an appointed channel for the communication of spiritual consolation and refreshment unto their souls, of which they are not debarred from availing themselves; but is a duty, which they cannot habitually neglect, without being guilty of direct and absolute disobedience.

I am persuaded that few of those persons of moral and reputable habits as members of society, who are accustomed to neglect this affecting memorial of a Saviour's love, reflect upon the nature and extent of that disobedience, which is involved in the utter rejection of it. Besides that this conduct is in direct opposition to such plain and unequivocal injunctions as that already mentioned, it amounts, when wilful and designed, to a deliberate refusal of that federal sign, which was expressly appointed and intended to be a distinguishing badge of the professed disciple of Christ. It is a virtual negation of all covenant relation and union with Christ. It is to deny Him in the eyes of men, in reference to that rite, in which above all others, He expressed it as his last—his dying wish, that He should be remembered, commemorated, and recognised. It is to close the lips against that cup of the new testament in his blood, which is replenished with the overflowings of his compassion, and is warmed with the fervours of his love. It is to refuse a voluntary attestation to that record of the Christian covenant, in which our names were enrolled at the initiatory rite of baptism, as pledging us to the confirmatory rite of the other sacrament. It is to deny the sanction of our own mature judgment to the solemn engagements, which

were then entered upon in our behalf. It is virtually to declare that either we have no need of the blessings, which are symbolized in that ordinance, or that we will not ratify with our own spontaneous act, and stamp with our own seal, the sacramental test of that covenant, by which we become entitled to the enjoyment of them.

All this is literally implied in a uniform and habitual abstinence from approaching the table of the Lord. It renders our whole character incongruous and incomplete. It leaves our Christian profession in a mutilated and imperfect condition. It is to treat with neglect the most urgent and affecting appeal that an incarnate Saviour ever addressed to his people here on earth. It is to disobey one of the most unequivocal and direct commands, which stand on record within the whole range of divine revelation. If, therefore, it had been totally destitute of all spiritual meaning—if it had been merely an arbitrary injunction of Jehovah, marked by no congruity, promising no favour, and conveying no benefit, but had stood forth to our notice as a naked expression of the divine will, it would still have been our duty to observe it. Our obligation to comply with such an injunction would have been paramount. But when the compassionate Saviour in urging the celebration of this sacred feast, condescends to assign the reason and object, for which He would have his disciples “do this”—when He reminds them that it was in remembrance of Him—that it was for a memorial of his glowing love and his bitter passion. When he interweaves with the command circumstances so painful and overpowering—when He identifies by

a symbolic transformation, the bread with his own body, and the wine with his own blood, it becomes infinitely more impressive and engaging. The obligation is thus not less permanent in its duration, than it is universal in its extent. It is enforced by an authority, which can neither be diminished nor gainsayed, and is to be coeval with Christianity itself. To do this in remembrance of a Saviour's death, therefore, is as binding at this moment, as it was in the apostolic age. It is as obligatory upon professing Christians of the present day, as it was upon the disciples themselves, and the very circumstance of being unprepared for the reception of these holy mysteries, instead of affording any justification for the neglect of them, only aggravates the guilt of continuing in a state of character, which precludes the present possibility of suitably complying with this express command. There is not an individual, at this moment, arrived at years of maturity, who is not placed under the most solemn obligation, as a professed follower of Christ, to vindicate the sincerity of that profession by the ratifying seal of the sacramental elements, and the very excuse of avowed unworthiness or unfitness, only calls upon him with a louder voice to repent, to believe, to seek for the celestial impress of the Holy Spirit upon his soul, that thus he may be a meet partaker of this sacred mystery.

Another ground of most impressive and constraining obligation belonging to the ordinance, which we are now considering, is *Gratitude* for the love and kindness, of which it forms so touching and appropriate a memorial. The command of

Christ was necessary to give this institution a force and a binding authority. But after it had received the sanction of his appointment—after it had been solemnly constituted one of the seals of the new covenant in his blood—after He had affectionately urged it upon his people as an everduring memento of all that He has done and suffered in their behalf, it might have been imagined that a sense of his unexampled beneficence and compassion, would have been sufficient to secure its devout and unvarying observance, without any direct reference to his positive injunction to that effect. Considering the grace of our Lord Jesus in becoming, though originally rich in the possession of all the glories of the heavenly world, yet for our sakes poor—recollecting that work of wondrous humiliation—of self-denial and bitter agony, which He so readily undertook on our account, it might have naturally been expected that our hearts should have glowed with the most fervent desire to testify by some specific act of public recognition, our sense of our inexpressible obligations to Him: When the hero falls in the maintenance of his country's cause, and on the field of what is deemed honorable warfare—when the statesman dies, whose talents had been long and usefully devoted to his country's service, the nation is anxious to evince its respect for his memory, and its acknowledgment of his worth, by some lasting token of its regard, which may carry down the record of his name and of his achievements to generations yet unborn—when the confessor resigns his spirit under the tortures of persecution, or amidst the flames of martyrdom, the church, in grateful re-

membrance of his fidelity, enrolls him among the most illustrious of her benefactors, and inscribes his name upon the brightest page of her history. Scarce, indeed, is an individual consigned to the dust, but surviving relatives and friends are anxious to rear over his tomb some abiding memorial of their gratitude and affection.

But where is the claim to be held in everlasting and imperishable remembrance, which can equal that of the eternal Son of God? Where is the love—where is the disinterestedness—where is the beneficence—where is the faithfulness—the self-denial—the suffering—the self-devotion—the signal triumph over the enemies of his church, which can compare with His? Every other instance of generosity and compassion—every other act of deliverance and salvation, when weighed against His, is lighter than the small dust of the balance. What love can equal that, which brought Him down from heaven to earth, and engaged Him to exchange the smiles of his Father's countenance, the adorations of angels, and the overflowings of heavenly blessedness, for a whole life of unmingled privation, and suffering, and reproach, terminating only with his death? What grief so oppressive and overwhelming as that which weighed down his spirit, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death? What pangs so exquisite as those, which pierced his soul in the garden, and wrung, as it were, great drops of blood out of his melting and perspiring frame? What season of human calamity and distress could equal that hour of darkness, in which the powers of death and hell were let loose upon Him. What forms of terror

and anguish can be conceived half so awful as those hidings of his Father's face, under which He was for a while doomed to suffer. What victory so complete as that which He announced with his expiring lips, as He lay suspended on the cross, and exclaimed, "it is finished." What deliverance is worthy to be named with that, which he achieved. And, finally, what benefits can be put in the balance against that glory, and honor, and immortality, which He hath purchased, and inalienably secured for his people!

Such are the claims of our adorable Lord and Saviour, to be kept in our grateful and affectionate remembrance. And what has He required us to do in acknowledgment of his love and of our obligation? If He had asked some great thing of us—if He had commanded us to commemorate his death by thousands of rams, and by ten thousands of rivers of oil—if we had been demanded for this purpose to give the fruit of our bodies as a testimony of the gratitude of our souls; though all, and more than all we have, would have been his due, yet such sacrifices He hath not asked at our hands. All that He hath requested of us as a memorial of the last bitter scene of his pilgrimage here on earth is, that we should, at stated periods, meet together around his table, and partake of those elements of bread and wine, which He consecrated and appointed to be the representative emblems of his body and blood. He desired no proud monument of art to record his death—no marble pillar to bear his name—no arch of triumph to signalize his victory. The memorial, which He chose, was a group of his faithful and devoted

people, collected together like so many living stones around his altar, to receive the tokens of his love, and to have his name inscribed in imperishable characters upon the fleshly tables of their hearts. If his command, therefore, fails to have its due effect upon us, let his love, and the innumerable benefits flowing from it, prove availing advocates in his behalf, and compel us to appear as welcome and duly prepared guests at his table.

Another ground of obligation pertaining to the Lord's supper is, that it is indispensably necessary to the consistency of the Christian profession. This sacred observance, as has been already stated, is one of the seals of the new covenant. They, therefore, who wilfully and habitually neglect it, do virtually put themselves out of the bond of that covenant. They refuse to have its seal put upon them. They reject the symbols of that body and blood, by which it has been ratified, and thus they openly declare that their Christian profession is not so much their own voluntary act as the result of circumstances, over which they had no control. No man can properly be regarded as the member of a visible Christian church, who does not comply with its fundamental rites and observances. Those persons, who do not complete their profession by partaking of the eucharist, must be considered to all practical purposes as renouncing the privileges of their Baptism.

The obligation to partake of this ordinance, therefore, does not merely arise from a regard to the will and command of God, but also from an indispensable regard to the harmony and con-

sistency of the Christian profession. The celebration of this solemn feast under the gospel, is analogous to the sacrifice of the paschal Lamb under the law. At this and other festivals, as they periodically returned, all the people of God, all the households of Israel, were required to be present to do homage to the God of their Fathers, and to recognize afresh their relation unto Him, as their God in covenant. Equally is it the duty of those who call themselves Christians, in consequence of having undergone the initiatory rite of Baptism, to come up into the house of the Lord, and to consummate their church-fellowship, by receiving the other sacramental seal of their professed union with Christ. This is one of the appointed methods of owning Him before men; to which so much importance is attached. It is a direct and unequivocal recognition of Him in his mediatorial character, and in the various offices, which He sustains in the economy of human salvation. It is a solemn and deliberate avowal of faith in his name—of reliance on his atonement—of dependence upon his righteousness—of confidence in his power and love, and of subjection to his just authority. And as all this is demanded and implied in a due reception of the sacrament, so the reverse of such acknowledgment and belief is involved with equal evidence in the neglect or refusal to partake of it. A uniform and designed absence from the Lord's table, indeed, after the judgment has been adequately informed, and the duty has been distinctly pointed out, cannot be viewed otherwise than, in reference to one most important particular, as a denial of Christ before men, and therefore as liable to the guilt, and ex-

posed to the dreadful penalty, which have been denounced against such an affront.

I would remark once more that the obligation to observe this sacred ordinance is apparent from the practice of the church and the example of believers throughout the whole range of the christian era from the age of the apostles until now. Of the first christians we continually read that they were assembled together on the first day of the week, for the purpose of breaking bread, in remembrance of their Lord's command. And it was for the purpose of regulating the manner of celebrating this feast of charity, and of correcting the abuses, which at that early period had crept into it, that the apostle entered into that elaborate discussion of the subject, which is contained in his epistle to the Corinthians. Ecclesiastical history informs us of the same fact, and bears testimony to the unbroken continuance of the practice, with slight modifications of the manner and extent, throughout every subsequent period.⁽¹⁹⁾ So jealous indeed were the primitive christians in the observance of this sacred duty and privilege, that in an age of bloody persecution it is recorded, that they sometimes substituted water for wine, when they were unable to use the latter without the danger of detection. And although this sacred rite in common with every other was mutilated, perverted and abused during the darker ages of superstition, yet when the light of the reformation began to dawn upon the world, it was restored to its primitive purity and simplicity ; and its legitimate observance was incorporated, as an essential element, into the constitutional discipline of the church.

CHAPTER III.

The Preparation necessary for the suitable reception of the Lord's Supper.

IN the two former chapters I endeavoured to unfold the design, and to point out the obligation of this holy ordinance. I now proceed to the third part of the subject—the *Preparation* necessary for its due and profitable reception. Of all the departments of this divine institution, which can claim our attention, this is perhaps the most important. Whatever may have been the specific purpose of the Saviour in the appointment of this distinguishing rite of his church—however obligatory it may be upon his professed followers, its design cannot be effectually secured, nor its claims to our observance suitably recognized, without due and serious preparation. Upon this, as well as other points connected with this sacramental seal of the covenant, very erroneous and injurious notions have prevailed in the world. With many the preparation for the sacrament has consisted, for the most part, of a series of superstitious and self-righteous abstinences, and of formal and unmeaning ceremonies. For a certain period of time preceding the celebration of the appointed festival, they have relinquished their usual occupations and amusements—fully intending to resume them, however, as soon as the solemnity was past. In

addition to this, they have imposed upon themselves the task of repeating a prescribed amount of devotional formularies and meditative confessions ; while amidst all this imposing apparatus of will-worship, and voluntary humility, the understanding was utterly ignorant of the genuine principles of the gospel as a saving scheme, and the heart was a total stranger to its sanctifying influences and effects.

Others there are who neglect all preparation for the sacred feast, to which they are invited. They view it simply as one of the outward forms of the religion, which they profess, and enter upon it in the same spirit, in which they engage in the other public services of the sanctuary. They regard it as part of the external machinery, which has been set up, but inquire not into the qualifications, which it involves, nor into the ends, which it is immediately designed to answer. With them there is no serious and devout reflection upon the awful responsibility which the reception of such an ordinance implies—there is no poignant sense, though there may be the outward profession, of contrition for past offences—there is no deep conviction of sin fastening upon the mind—alarming the conscience, and penetrating the heart : there is no exercise of lively faith, of vigorous hope, and of fervent charity : there is no grace of the spirit called into active and expanded operation ; and hence the ordinance, which was intended to be a means of strengthening the principles, of cherishing the devout affections, and of consolidating the whole character of believers becomes a dead letter—a symbol of guilt and condemnation,

instead of being a token of peace and reconciliation. The consecrated elements are thus divested of all their spiritual meaning and application, and become incapable of nourishing the soul, so that it may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The preparation, which is necessary to render us meet partakers of this holy communion, may be considered under a twofold aspect—as *general*, relating to the universal principles, and indispensable requisites of the Christian character; and as *particular* or special—having a direct reference to the peculiar nature and requisitions of the sacrament proposed to be received. In illustration of the first of these questions, it may be remarked, that before we can be properly prepared to approach the table of the Lord, it is necessary that we should institute a strict inquiry into our own state and character, as we stand in the sight of God. To professing Christians—especially to those who are desirous of confirming their baptismal covenant, by the additional ratification of the Lord's supper, this may perhaps be deemed a superfluous investigation. In the case of such persons, it is generally taken for granted, that whatever defects or imperfections may attach to their character, they occupy a safe position with respect to their state before God, and their future destiny. It is readily assumed, that in reference to the great question, upon which their everlasting peace and welfare depend, they rest upon a firm and secure foundation. But if it be true that religion does not consist in a mere name, that Christianity is of no avail, unless it be received into the

heart, and incorporated into the character—that a great and important change must take place in our nature, as well as in our relative condition, before we can be objects of divine favour and love—then assuredly is it no trifling or irrelevant question connected with the subject, which we are now considering, whether we be really of the number of those, who are privileged to hold communion with God through the medium of this emblematic ordinance. In proposing to approach the table of the Lord, therefore, in fulfilment of the Saviour's command, the first inquiry to be instituted is, whether in the general estimate of our character and conduct we are entitled, upon scriptural principles, to regard ourselves as those who are at peace with God. In order to determine this all-important question, there are certain tests laid down in the volume of inspiration, by the due application of which we may arrive at a just and accurate conclusion. Unless our character will bear the scrutiny conducted upon these principles, we are assuredly not in a condition, though this by no means exempts us from the obligation, which the command of Christ imposes, and our own profession involves, to partake of these sublime mysteries.

As an essential element in the general preparation, which we are now discussing, we would state the necessity of our having experienced that change of state and character, which in the language of analogical illustration, is in scripture denominated Regeneration, or the new birth. The question here is not whether we have undergone the symbolical washing of water—whether we have

been incorporated into outward communion with the church of Christ by baptism—whether the sign of the cross is borne upon the front of our external profession. It is not merely whether our character, as members of society, be decent and respectable—whether in the discharge of our relative duties we be exemplary and correct—whether in our attendance upon the public services of religion we be regular and apparently devout—considerations highly important in themselves: but passing beyond these outer courts of the character, and penetrating into the inner sanctuary of the heart, have we good ground to believe that we have experienced that renovating process, which in the view of its effects, can with any propriety of language be described as a new birth? Have we been made new creatures in Christ Jesus? Have we been made partakers of the Spirit of Christ, without which we can be none of his? Have we been really renewed in the spirit of our minds? Have our affections been diverted from their native channels, which ran parallel with the course of this world, and directed in pure and devout aspirations to the things which are above? These are the questions, which we are to put to our own consciences for the purpose of ascertaining whether we have made that transition from death unto life, without which we have no claim nor meetness to be received as guests at the sacramental table. The bread there dispensed is designed and adapted for the children of God only—for it is they alone, who can be strengthened and nourished up by it into everlasting life. The wine there poured is intended only for the refreshment

and support of those, who have become members of God's family, by having been born of his Spirit, and are therefore privileged to address Him, "Abba Father."

In order, however, more fully to ascertain the real state of our character, with reference to our new birth, and the train of blessings and privileges connected with it, we must proceed to inquire whether we have sincerely *Repented* of our sins past, inasmuch as this forms an indispensable part of that general preparation—of that fundamental qualification, without which no round of formal observances—no range of self-righteous abstinences—no propriety of external demeanour can be an effectual passport into the divine presence. Repentance is usually represented in Scripture as the turning point of the Christian character—as the introductory step in the Christian life—as the first movement of the divine Spirit, brooding over the dark and confused abyss of the human mind. Under the influence of this transforming and life-giving energy, the varied elements of thought and feeling, which had hitherto presented a promiscuous scene of moral debasement and spiritual darkness, begin to assume forms of symmetry and beauty, and to be clothed in robes of light. Repentance, where it is deep and genuine, effects an entire revolution in the whole system of the character. The principles and the passions, which once exercised an indisputable sovereignty over the soul, have now been deposed from their usurped authority, and have been superseded in their predominant influence by those sentiments and affections, which are the immediate fruit of the Spirit.

In close union with repentance, Faith stands at the very threshold of that new life, which is the foundation of all meetness for a participation of the holy supper. It is by faith alone, indeed, as the medium of spiritual nutrition, that we can eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ. And hence in the hortatory address of the church directed to those, who intend to partake of this holy communion, a lively faith is immediately connected with a truly penitent heart as being indispensably necessary to secure the great benefit it is calculated to impart. Until Christ has been recognized and cordially received as a Saviour indeed the ordinance, which is peculiarly commemorative of his atoning death, must be altogether inappropriate to the character, and foreign to every predominant principle and feeling of the soul. It is unto faith as the organ of spiritual perception, and the ground-work of every spiritual affection and emotion, that this vivid and impressive exhibition of a Saviour's love is peculiarly adapted. To the eye of sense it is nothing but a process of mechanical operation—dry, formal, and unmeaning. To the view of unenlightened reason, it presents nothing but a vague ceremony—a species of solemn pageantry periodically exhibited to the eye, but conveying no clear ideas of its spiritual import to the understanding, and no lively impressions to the heart. It is faith alone, which gives it real significance and force—which clothes it with the moral dignity, and infuses into it the vitality of a divine institution. It is faith alone, which can rend the veil of the outward imagery—which can penetrate the emblematic representation, and perceive the

inward truth—which can look through the sign into the thing signified, and pass on from the form into the essence. It is faith alone, which can there behold Christ crucified as evidently set forth—which in the material element of bread can behold his lacerated flesh, and in the liquid fruit of the vine, can realize the effusion of his blood, and thus by a spiritual, though not literal transformation of nature, can convert them into angels' food. It is faith alone, which can see Christ as He is there held forth to the view, in the glory of his person—in the wonderful grace of his humiliation—in the efficacy of his atonement—in the completeness of his righteousness—in the tenderness of his compassion—in the immutability of his love, and in the faithfulness and security of his truth. As without faith it is impossible to please God, so without faith it is impossible that any should be meet partakers of this holy mystery.

Let us examine ourselves, therefore, whether we be in the faith—whether we have had power given us to become the sons of God, by believing on the name of his son Jesus Christ—whether we have cordially acceded to the terms of the gospel, by reposing with a fulness of recumbency, and an exclusiveness of reliance, upon Him as a Saviour. Let us inquire into the nature, character, and effects of our faith—whether it be not a vague, speculative, indefinite, and uninfluential assent to the declarations of scripture, or whether it be a realizing, vital, powerful, and practical principle, uniting the soul in all its faculties and affections unto Christ, and concentrating all our hopes and expectations in Him as our Redeemer. Until we are

enabled thus to lay hold upon Him, and are incorporated into Him as our Head, we have no claim or title to any one of the blessings and privileges of that salvation, which was wrought out by Him. It is faith alone, which gives us an interest in Him—which enables us to hold communion with Him—which qualifies us to sit down at his table, and to partake of the banquet of his love. It is faith, which marks us out for his people, and brings us within the bonds of his covenant, and which in connection with hope and charity, constitutes that indissoluble cord of love and fellowship, that no created power can destroy. On no question of character therefore—on no point of necessary preparation for the eucharistic feast ought our examination to be more close and rigid, than in reference to the validity and efficacy of our faith in Christ.

These are tests of general character, and of our real state before God. They are absolute, universal, and indispensable requisites, without which we cannot be the children of God, nor be entitled to the privileges of his house. The regeneration of the soul through the influences of the Holy Spirit—a repentance deep, genuine, and sincere—a faith in Christ vital, cordial, and influential, are elemental principles of the new creature, and until these be embodied in the character, we must of necessity be strangers to the covenant of promise—aliens from the commonwealth of the saints, without hope, and without God in the world. To become possessed of these in all their vitality, energy, and practical efficacy, must therefore be the foundation of all other preparation, for a

suitable compliance with the Saviour's last command.

This, however, is not all that is required. We must pass beyond these general points of requisition, and adopt a system of more minute and specific preparation. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is an institution of a peculiar character and design, and therefore requires a peculiar order of qualifications in the recipient, in order that its object may be realized to the full extent. It is not enough that the soul should be in a state of security, as having been admitted into peace with God, but it must be put into an attitude of special readiness for an act of more than ordinary solemnity—for a service, which is calculated above most others, to bring it into a close and intimate fellowship with God. In order to this, there must be instituted a process of serious and honest self-scrutiny, not only with respect to our state and relative condition in the sight of God, but also with reference to our prevailing habits, and dispositions of mind and character. This examination must extend to every department of our conduct, and must bring to the test of the unerring balances of the sanctuary, all the principles, by which we are guided, and all the motives, by which we are actuated and impelled. It must embrace the whole range of our character in the various aspects and relations, which it bears both towards God and towards man. We must retire in pensive meditation and devout reflection into our own closets—we must there call our ways to remembrance—we must review the course of our past conduct—we must survey in all their deep and unmitigated

aggravation, our own past transgressions—we must set in order before the eye of our own conscience the dark catalogue of our offences, and contemplate in the light of celestial truth the dread array of our sins—we must take with us the candle of the Lord, and penetrate into the deepest recesses of our own hearts—we must enter into every secret laboratory of thought and feeling, into every curious chamber of the imagination—we must investigate and try the whole by the standard of unerring truth.

And in connection with this survey of our own state, and of the principles of our own character, we must bring under our most vivid and realizing contemplation, the stupendous wonders of redeeming love. We must meditate with profound and fervent adoration upon the various attributes of Deity, as engaged in the formation and accomplishment of the plan of human salvation. We must survey the love, the mercy, the wisdom, the power, which originated, directed, and brought to a triumphant issue the whole of that unparalleled scheme of divine contrivance. We must trace it to its benignant fountain in the Father's everlasting love. We must pursue the stream as it flows in one blended current of salvation, combining together the grace of the Son of God, and the influences of the eternal Spirit. We must mark its progress as it displayed itself at intervals through the medium of the promises and ceremonial institutions of the patriarchal and Levitical dispensations, until, the fulness of time having now arrived, it burst forth upon Mount Calvary in all the copiousness of its resources and in all the

clearness of its manifestation. We must with the angels of glory, endeavour to look with a keener glance, and penetrate with a deeper search into the mysteries of our redemption. We must labour, in some degree, to raise our ideas to the sublimity and ineffable dignity of the object of our contemplation, to catch something of the spirit of purity, benignity, and love, by which the whole scheme is so strongly characterized. We must endeavour to bring the matter home, from a remote, indefinite, and unimpressive grandeur, to our own hearts in all its reality, simplicity, and force. We must fix our eyes with intense gratitude, and overpowering admiration, upon the affecting spectacle of the only begotten Son of God, suspended in expiring agony upon the ignominious tree of the cross, and aid our meditation with the view of that striking memorial of his bitter passion, which was specifically instituted by Himself. When our understanding has been exercised, our imagination elevated, our memory replenished, and our affections enlivened and warmed with these sentiments and reflections, we shall be better prepared to partake of that feast of sacred and heavenly love, the express design of which is to impress them more deeply upon our hearts.

The suitable preparation for this sacramental symbol of the new covenant, however, is not to be confined to mere retrospective views of our own character and conduct, and to admiring contemplations of the love and compassion of Jehovah, as displayed in the plan of our redemption. It does not consist in bare exercises of the heart, however genuine and profound. Much less is it

sufficient to revel in mystic visions of divine love, and to unfold the wings of our fancy in flights of indefinite admiration. With the due and necessary direction of all the faculties of our nature, to the sublime objects of our contemplation, the preparation, which we are now discussing, must combine what is more influential in its bearing, and more practical in its effects. We would, therefore, notice it as an indispensable requisite to just preparation for this ordinance, that there be a prompt and entire abandonment of every *known sin*. If in the prosecution of that strict and rigid scrutiny, which we have already represented as necessary, there should be discovered any habit of mind or conduct, which is in direct opposition to the will of God, but which had hitherto been disregarded or overlooked, no man should presume to approach the table of the Lord, without casting away from him that abominable thing, which God hateth. It is recorded by one of the most ancient and illustrious of heathen poets, that the devout warriors and heroes of antiquity, shrunk with a feeling of holy dread, from engaging in any sacred rite, while their hands were stained with blood.⁽²⁰⁾ It was their practice to wash away the pollution in some limpid stream, before they ventured upon such a service. And if such was the feeling of heathens in reference to physical defilement, occasioned by violence and bloodshed, with how much greater solemnity, circumspection, and care, ought we to cleanse ourselves from those contaminations of sin, with which we may have been infected, before we engage in a duty so peculiarly sacred, so sublimely pure as that which now claims our attention. If, therefore, on

a deliberate and honest survey of our past character, we discover that any root of bitterness still adheres unto us—that any evil propensity still retains its dominion over us, whether it be some constitutional infirmity, some besetting sin, into which we are most prone to fall, or whether it be some open violation of the law of God, in which we have hitherto been accustomed to indulge—whether it be the sin of anger and hatred, of envy and jealousy, of dishonesty and fraud, of intemperance and excess, of lying and deceit, of blasphemy and profaneness, or of impurity and licentiousness—whether it be any one of these, or any other out of that dark catalogue, which the Apostle enumerates as constituting the works of the flesh, let it be at once removed, as a dead limb, from our character; nor let there be a single act of transgression, in which we wilfully indulge, to rise in judgment against us, and to condemn us in the court of our own conscience, while we kneel before the altar of our God. At this banquet of celestial joy and love, let us make it our endeavour to appear clad in the spotless and unsullied robe of personal holiness and righteousness.

In immediate connection with this universal relinquishment of past sin, there must be a firm resolution, in dependence on divine grace and strength, henceforth to walk closely and humbly with God. The celebration of the Lord's supper is not only a remembrancer of the past, but is also an express renewal of the covenant, which hath been made between God and the soul. In this sacred compact it is implied as a primary condition, that we choose the Lord for our God, and that we

yield ourselves unto Him as his faithful and obedient people. It enters into the very essence of that federal relation unto Him, to which we are introduced by it, that we regard ourselves no longer as our own—that we relinquish our own will, so far as it may be inconsistent with his law, and that we pledge ourselves to a cheerful, uniform, and universal submission to his authority. Before, therefore, we lay our hands upon his altar, before we eat the bread and drink the wine of the covenant, which is to be there ratified, and receive the seal of appropriation, which is to be there affixed upon our souls, we must come to a firm, deliberate and resolute determination in our own minds, that whatever may have been our past conduct, we shall henceforth devote ourselves in cordial and unreserved obedience to the service of God—that we shall deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present evil world—that we shall cheerfully lay ourselves out in his course—that we shall zealously employ every talent, wherewith He hath entrusted us—every opportunity, which He may afford us and every faculty and endowment with which He hath blessed us, in advancing his glory and interest in the world—that we shall maintain habits of close and intimate fellowship with Him by prayer and devout meditation, and that we shall make it our meat and drink to do his will.

Lastly, the preparation, which will render us meet partakers of the eucharistic banquet, requires that we should banish all malice and unkindness from our hearts—that we should unreservedly forgive those, who may have been guilty of any in-

jury or offence against us, our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, if any such exist, and cultivate a feeling of universal benignity, kindness, and good will. The sacrament is pre-eminently a feast of charity. It was instituted at the conclusion of an entertainment, in which brotherly love shone conspicuous—it was intended to commemorate the most striking manifestation of love—it was designed to be a bond of love—it breaths an atmosphere of love—it is a foretaste of those higher raptures of love, which will glow in the bosoms of the Redeemed, when they shall have now been linked in closer and sublimer fellowship with the Father of their spirits in the everlasting mansions of the blest. Nothing therefore can be more unseemly, nothing more discordant with the spirit and design of the eucharist, nothing more incompatible with the obligations, which it involves, than the indulgence of a resentful, malignant, and unforgiving disposition of mind. If we would be suitable guests at this celestial banquet, we must lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envyings, and evil-speakings, and, like new born babes, desire the pure and wholesome food which is there dispensed, and by feeding on which in faith and love, we may be nourished up into everlasting life.

CHAPTER IV.

The Benefits attendant on a worthy Reception of the Lord's Supper.

It does not lie within our province to determine what it is right that Jehovah should prescribe for our observance. As in the natural world there are many things, of which we are at present incompetent to form a correct judgment, and the exact position of which, in the general system of divine goodness and benevolence, we are incapable of tracing, so in the vast and comprehensive scheme of the moral government of God, there are doubtless various precepts, the peculiar benefit and advantage of which we can now but very imperfectly appreciate. In reference to such injunctions, our duty is obviously to acquiesce with cheerfulness and alacrity in the revealed will of God. For every purpose of just and rational obedience, it is enough for us to know that He is a God of infinite power, and wisdom, and love—that His authority over us is sovereign and complete—that His right to our obedience is paramount to every other obligation, and that His attributes afford an inviolable pledge that His commands are all founded upon principles of the most perfect rectitude and benevolence. Jehovah might, indeed, have established laws, and appointed ordinances, which would have no immediate relation to our interest. But in

the general scheme of his administration, He hath manifestly connected our own direct and palpable advantage with the institutions, which He hath enjoined upon our observance.

This is peculiarly the case with the ordinance, to which our attention is now directed. We have already pointed out the design of this institution. We have endeavoured to exhibit its authority, and the universal obligation which belongs to it, as enforced by the direct command of Christ Himself, and as recognized in the practice of his church throughout the whole period of its history. As, however, no means of grace can be availing—no divine ordinance can be suitably and profitably observed, unless the mind be properly qualified to enter upon it, we proceeded to unfold at some length the preparation, which is necessary for a due reception of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Having thus brought forward such considerations as may be deemed calculated to convince men of the duty of engaging in this holy rite, and of carrying into practical effect the Saviour's dying appeal to his disciples, it remains that we should state some of those benefits, which, when this sacred ordinance is celebrated in a spirit of repentance, faith, and love, cannot fail to be associated with it. This department of the subject is in delightful accordance with that view, which we are led to take of it by all the representations of scripture, as well as the whole tenor of our own ecclesiastical service connected with it. While the profane sinner, and the presumptuous formalist are indeed, warned in the most awful terms against rushing with unholy hands into these mysteries of

the sanctuary, to the sincere penitent and devout believer it is invariably exhibited as a pledge of the most exalted blessings—as a warrant of the highest hopes, and the most confident expectations—as a spring of the most cheering consolations, pouring forth its refreshing streams to revive the pilgrims of the desert, as they are ready to sink under the heat and burden of the day—as a banquet of celestial delights, to strengthen the weak and to feed the hungry—as an earnest of that inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away. And hence it has always been regarded by the true Christian, as one of his choicest and most valued privileges—as one of those channels of communication, which brought him into nearest and closest intercourse with the Father of his spirit—as one of those brooks, of which he was allowed to drink along the way in order to enable him to lift up his head.

Among the benefits calculated to result from this ordinance to those, who partake of it with the due and necessary preparation, I would notice, in the first place, the *Blessing*, which may justly be considered as invariably attendant on a cheerful and cordial compliance with a divine command. In our statement of the obligatory character of this ordinance, we remarked that it was founded upon an express injunction of the Saviour Himself—“This do in remembrance of me.” This is not a bare authoritative expression of will, but it is an injunction immediately followed by a reason, and in that reason is doubtless involved an important promise. Indeed the commands of God universally are but promises of blessing conveyed

in the form of precepts, and couched under the more concise and impressive phraseology of simple injunctions. The benefit, if not expressly stated, is always understood as belonging to the fulfilment of the proposed condition, and it is the business of faith to supply the deficiency of the expression. There is a very remarkable instance of the importance, which Jehovah attaches to obedience, in the case of the Rechabites, recorded in the prophecy of Jeremiah. The founder of that pious family had strictly prohibited his children and descendants from drinking wine—a prohibition which they observed with the most scrupulous fidelity throughout the whole line of their succession. At God's command the prophet took a number of them into the house of the Lord, and offered them wine to drink, and when they had resolutely declined, the Lord was so much pleased with the reverential regard, which they paid to their father's command, that He promised them a special blessing, and He brings forward, in striking contrast, the disobedience of the people of Israel to his injunctions, and the judgments, which He would bring upon them. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of hosts—the God of Israel—behold I bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard, and I have called unto them, but they have not answered." Jehovah Himself indeed condescends, in very frequent instances, to enforce his injunctions upon this very principle, that they are for our good. "Serve the Lord thy God, says He, with all thy heart, and

with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good." And his servant Moses acknowledges on the part of the people of Israel, "The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes—to fear the Lord our God, for our good always."

If, therefore, we had no other advantage to specify as connected with the devout observance of this institution than that, which universally attends a cordial compliance with a divine command, we should still have sufficient ground to regard it as a privilege replete with benefit, and pledging to us the most exalted good. As we cannot refuse such a compliance without rebelling against the authority, and without incurring the displeasure of the most High, so it is impossible that we should observe in a spirit of submission, gratitude, and love, his own express command, without securing, in a proportionate degree, his favour and good-will. While the Saviour looks down from his glorious throne above, or rather, while in virtue of his omnipresence, He takes his position among us, and watches the manner, in which his last command is regarded by his professed followers—while he notices, with the keen and penetrating glance of omniscience, the levity and contempt, with which it is treated by some—the unreflecting indifference, with which it is dismissed from the thoughts of others, and the almost universal neglect, upon some ground or other, into which it has fallen among the great mass of nominal Christians—in some cases through the want of due attention to the subject—in others through the ab-

sence of a correct knowledge of the obligation and importance, which belong to it, and in a third class, through conscious unfitness and a wilful indulgence in habits, which are utterly at variance with its spirit and design,—while he witnesses these things, it is impossible that He should not view with peculiar satisfaction and delight, the conduct of those, who, being actuated with a sincere desire to please and honour Him, kneel beside his altar, and receive with emotions of overpowering gratitude and affection, the tokens of his remembrance. Upon such we may feel assured that his eye rests with more than ordinary benignity and complacency towards such the bowels of his compassion yearn with inexpressible sympathy and tenderness. To such his promises are plighted, and his covenant mercies are sealed in fresh attestations of his love, and in bonds of inviolable engagement. Such persons may, therefore, be justly considered as enjoying a special blessing—as attracting to themselves an eye of favourable notice and regard, on the very ground of their conscientious and faithful observance of this divinely appointed ordinance.

We may again notice, as an essential and important benefit associated with this institution—the salutary effect of the process of preparation, as unfolded in the last chapter, upon the mind and character. However obvious and apparent may be the duties and requisitions of the Christian profession, we continually require to be reminded of them by something, which is calculated to bring them prominently before the view of the mind, and to impress them deeply upon the conscience. This, indeed, is one of the express purposes of the

various rites, ceremonies, and positive institutions of religion. They are so many remembrancers of the great truths and obligations, which without such aids, would be in danger of falling into utter oblivion and neglect. They are so many pillars set up at different stages in our pilgrimage—inscribed with the memorials of divine grace and goodness, and of our own correspondent obligations. They are so many tables of stone, engraven with the finger of Deity, and deposited within the ark of his church, as authoritative expressions of his will and purposes, and as standing records of our duties and privileges. They are so many embodied representations of those mysteries of our faith, and of those requirements of our practice, which in their naked character would transcend our views by their sublimity, elude our grasp by their abstruseness, or escape our recollection and our regard, through their remoteness from all connection with our outward senses.

Such is emphatically the sacrament of the Lord's supper. This comprehensive and affecting ordinance brings the whole range of divine truth, every requisite of the Christian character into view. When surveyed under all its bearings and modifications, there is scarcely a duty or a privilege which it does not in some form urge on the attention. It brings, at successive intervals the whole character, in its various relations and habits, under consideration, and by this means operates with a most powerful and salutary influence, in rendering every department of the conduct an object of special inquiry and regard. The process of previous and preparatory self-examination,

which it requires, is most eminently calculated to produce a more perfect acquaintance with the character, in reference to its present state and future prospects. It teaches the soul its need of a Saviour, by producing a clear conviction of the inadequacy of its own efforts. It points out the absolute necessity of regeneration, through the influences of the Holy Spirit, of that repentance, which is towards God, and of that faith, which is towards our Lord Jesus Christ. It shews the evil and malignity of sin in a most striking and impressive light, that it should require such a sacrifice as that of the only begotten Son of God. It brings the various principles and graces of the Christian life and character into most active and vigorous exercise. It gives new life and spirit to the whole system. It breaks in with a salutary commotion upon the stillness and the stagnancy of habits, which are apt to subside into a corrupt sediment, defiling the purity and darkening the bright transparency of the character. It gives a heavenward direction to every faculty and affection of the soul. It gives a celerity and a promptness to every movement along the paths of piety and truth. It imparts an increased intensity to every holy purpose—an additional vigor to every good resolution, and raises the standard of the whole character into a higher point of elevation in the scale of spirituality, piety, and of decisive and unequivocal devotedness of the whole heart and soul unto the service of God. It thus unfolds to the view the extensive panorama of the Christian's defects and imperfections—of his dangers, arising from the varied forms of temptation, which beset him, and thus cherishes in him

a spirit of watchfulness and dependence—of the demands of God and of his own corresponding obligations, and thus operates as an active stimulus, urging him to more strenuous exertions and inspiring him with such a deep-felt conviction of the just claims of his Redeemer, as will secure that he will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the work of the Lord ; but that leaving the things, which are behind, he will still be labouring to press forward to the things, which are before, and to be rising to higher attainments in the divine life, until he has arrived at the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ.

Apart, therefore, from the actual participation of the sacramental emblems themselves, the very process of self-scrutiny, which it demands—the course of serious and devout preparation, which the due and acceptable reception of the ordinance implies—the train of solemn meditation and reflection, by which it is usually preceded—the relinquishment of sinful habits and indulgences, which is indispensable as a qualifying condition—the contrition for past offences, the resolutions of amendment, the forgiveness of injuries, the exercises of charity, the cultivation of brotherly kindness and universal benevolence, which it so emphatically requires and enjoins—the faith, the hope, the love, the graces of the Spirit in all their delightful variety and combination, which the considerate prospect of observing it is so eminently calculated to foster—all these circumstances and considerations, which form so many elements in that process of preparation, which has been already described, cannot fail, independently of any

ulterior result, to render the sacrament of the Lord's supper of the most important spiritual advantage to him, by whom it is suitably approached. It gives a direction to the thoughts and feelings: it gives a discipline to the mind: it gives a temporary training to the character, and a check to its evil propensities, which must be in the highest degree salutary in their effects, even if no further benefit was to be derived from it.

But I would remark, that another very important benefit attendant on a devout and worthy reception of the sacrament of the Lord's supper is the obligation, which it is acknowledged and felt to impose upon the character and conduct for the future. This, indeed, I have no doubt, is one of the principal reasons, why so many persons absent themselves from this delightful and animating part of our service, neglect this unquestionable duty, and rob themselves of this exalted privilege. They are aware of the solemn obligations, which it involves, though it does not of itself create; they well know that a peculiar sanctity of deportment, and circumspection of conduct are expected of those, who thus pledge themselves at the altar of God; they are, at the same time conscious of the delinquencies, which belong to their character, and of the temptations, to which they are accustomed to yield: they have come to no decided resolution, in dependence upon divine aid, to enter on a change of conduct for the future; to put out the right eye, or to cut off the right hand, by which they had been so frequently betrayed into sin; they are too sensible of their own prevailing principles and habits, to allow them for a moment

to persuade themselves that they make any serious attempt to subdue their evil passions; to mortify their sinful affections, and to bring every thought, and feeling, and action into captivity to the gospel of Christ; and hence they conclude, doubtless with much comfort and satisfaction to their own consciences, that as they are not fit, and have no desire or intention for the present to become fit, it is better for them to stay away, lest they should be adding the sin of hypocrisy to the sin of sabbath breaking, or the sin of intemperance, or the sin of fraud, or the sin of oppression, or the sin of blasphemy, or the more general and comprehensive sin of an entire forgetfulness of God—of the neglect of prayer, private and domestic, in short to the utter want of the great, distinguishing and indispensable characteristics of the Christian life. These under some of their varied forms and modifications are the real causes, why so many of us, in direct opposition to our profession as Christians, habitually abstain from this seal and confirmatory rite of the evangelical covenant. We are unwilling, as we conceive it, prematurely to bind ourselves by such a sanction, and to burden ourselves with the additional weight of the obligation, which it unquestionably imposes.

But although this consideration may have the effect of deterring some persons from approaching the table of the Lord—an effect indeed hardly to be regretted, while they continue in such a state of mind, it cannot be viewed otherwise than as eminently beneficial unto those, by whom it is duly appreciated; and who cheerfully yield themselves to its influence. While it operates as a just and

salutary check upon those, who have not yet come to a resolution to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to surrender themselves in willing and conscientious obedience to the will of God, it acts with a most powerful and advantageous control upon the character and conduct of those, who have deliberately placed themselves within the range of its influence. It was from the dread of incurring the peculiar obligation of this federal stipulation, and from the desire of enjoying an exemption from the more aggravated guilt, which was supposed to characterize the sin, committed after the ordinance had been received, that many persons in early times put it off until the latest possible period of life, when it would seem to be no longer in their power to perpetrate any deed of open iniquity. Indeed, it frequently happens to the ministers of Christ, in their visits to the sick and the dying, to hear persons declaring with deep regret and self-reproach, that, swayed by some notions of this kind, they had abstained throughout the whole period of their past life, from complying with the command of their Saviour, and that they are anxious, before the opportunity is irrecoverably lost, of retrieving their past neglect. If they had addicted themselves to the ordinance at a former period, the demands of obvious consistency and propriety would have been more than they were prepared punctually to recognize; and hence they lost all the advantages, which such a recognition would have secured to them.

In the case of devout, reflecting, and sober-minded young persons, this symbol of a complete and voluntary union with the church of Christ,

frequently operates with a most wholesome and influential effect. With such the participation of the holy sacrament is a grand and important era in their history. They then appear unto themselves to enter upon a new scene, to commence a new life, and to subject themselves to new and most important obligations. With them such an act is a solemn, public, deliberate, and avowed dedication of themselves unto the service of God : it is the consecration of the hallowed temples of their bodies for divine and holy uses : it is the symbolic presentation of themselves, souls and bodies, upon the altar of redeeming love, to be a holy, and lively sacrifice unto God, which is their reasonable service : it is a professed renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; an engagement sealed with the blood of the everlasting covenant, that they will henceforth yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead ; and employ the members of their bodies, as well as the faculties of their souls, as instruments of holiness unto righteousness. Pledged by such vows, and bound by such obligations, it is impossible that they should not, in some degree, feel the awful responsibilities of their profession, and endeavour to rise habitually to the level of their vocation. And thus by a practical recognition of their sacramental obligations, will their profiting be apparent unto all men.

A fourth important benefit attending the faithful and devout observance of this sacred ordinance is the effect ; which it is calculated to produce in confirming and strengthening the various principles and graces of the Christian character. As

the constituent members of the bodily frame require to be recruited and invigorated by seasonable and appropriate supplies of natural food, so those endowments of the renewed soul, which may be considered as forming the elements of the new creature, must be sustained with a due proportion of congenial nourishment, in order to be preserved from languishment and decay. Breathing the corrupt atmosphere of a sinful world, exposed to the chilling blasts of persecution, derision, and neglect on the one hand, and to the scorching heat of temptation on the other, the soul will speedily lose its high-toned energy of spiritual affection, and sink into comparative impotence and inefficiency—its expansive vigor of faculty will shrink into torpor and imbecility—its uncompromising firmness of purpose will relax and melt into feebleness—its Christian graces will wither and pine away—its glowing ardour will be quenched—its faith will begin to doubt—its hope to tremble—its love to grow cold, and its zeal to evaporate, unless these several principles and affections be continually fed with fresh supplies immediately communicated from above. It was for the main purpose of conveying these invigorating supports that this sacred festival was instituted. In this it is, in an especial manner, that Jehovah spreads a table before his people, inviting them to partake freely of the rich provisions, which He hath made for their wants. In this divine ordinance He sets before them a feast of fat things—a feast of wines on the lees—of fat things full of marrow—of wines on the lees well refined. And they, who partake of it in a spirit of humble and sincere waiting upon

the Lord, shall thereby renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary—they shall walk and not faint.

The last benefit, which we shall notice as connected with this ordinance, is the refreshment it affords unto the soul, as a foretaste of heavenly joy. At its original institution, indeed, it was peculiarly associated by the Saviour himself with the blessedness of heaven, when he informed his disciples that he would no more drink with them of that fruit of the vine, until they drank it new with him in his Father's kingdom. Around this sacred board the children of God are assembled together in holy and affectionate union, to receive from his hand that bread, which may nourish them unto everlasting life, and that cup of consolation, which may comfort their desponding hearts, soothe their troubled spirits, and refresh their weary souls, while they are prosecuting their journey homeward. In this sublime communion of all that is most pure and exalted in their sympathies—of all that is most animating and transporting in their anticipations, every storm of earthly passion is hushed—every animosity is forgotten—every tumult of worldly care and anxiety subsides—the elements of strife have ceased to disturb and agitate the breast—the sound of discord is unknown to the ear—the clouds of fear and dismay no longer rise in dark and menacing array before the eye. In this midway scene between earth and heaven—on this mount of spiritual transfiguration, on which the face of every faithful and devout worshipper is illumined with peculiar irradiations of divine glory, all is calm, tranquil and serene. The atmosphere is blest

with the felt presence of Him, who breathes peace and harmony and melody all around Him. On this, if on any spot, which has been blasted with the curse of sin, angels and men may meet together as on common ground, while the one party ascends on the wings of holy love and contemplation to the throne of the Eternal, and the other descends along the mystic ladder of affectionate interest and benevolent regard, and thus their mutual joys and gratulations swell into one blended tide of gratitude and delight—of adoration, thanksgiving and praise, which affords the most vivid representation as well as the most realizing foretaste of the felicities of the heavenly world. Lifting up our hearts unto Thee therefore, O thou Father of our spirits, and in blest accord with those strains, which are attuned to thy praise in thy courts above, let us, through the medium of that sacred ordinance, which thou hast appointed, “with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, laud and magnify thy glorious name—evermore praising thee and saying—holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory: glory be to thee, O Lord Most High.”

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

NOTE (1) PAGE 18.—Amidst the endless diversities of character and opinion, which prevail among mankind, it affords a convincing attestation to the claim, which the Deity has upon the public and united homage of his creatures, that very few, if any communities of human beings have existed, of whose social arrangements divine worship, either supported by legislative enactment, or maintained by conventional habits, bearing all the force and sanction of law, did not form a prominent and distinguished part. Under every form, and throughout the successive economies of revealed religion, the service of God has been distinctly and unequivocally enforced; and human governments, whenever they have been such as made a profession of the true faith, have usually deemed it as coming within the range of their just and legitimate functions, to make a due provision for its maintenance. To exercise a becoming zeal for the honor of God, and to take effectual measures for the instruction of the people in the great doctrines and duties of religion, without encroaching upon the important principle of the right of conscience—to combine the advantages of different institutions that have prevailed with such regulations as are calculated to obviate their incidental evils, must be acknowledged by every one who has calmly and impartially studied the subject to be one of the most difficult and delicate questions, which can engage the attention of an enlightened and christian statesman. Without further entering into the subject in this place, as being unsuitable to the design of a practical treatise, it is impossible not to admire the delightful and elevated spirit which breathes in the following sentiments connected with this controversy, coming from one of the brightest ornaments—I will

not say of nonconformity, but of the catholic church of Christ.—“ For my own part, I must profess not to have the least doubt concerning the thing itself which we and our ministers do, and practise. It is only our common great concern, to be very careful with what temper of spirit, and with what design we do it. It should to the uttermost be endeavoured to be done with all meekness and humility, with all possible reverence to authority, abhorrence of the least real contempt, and unfeigned regret, there should be any appearance of it, though never so unavoidable; with a design only to glorify God, and promote the common salvation: not to make or serve a party, or advance any other interest than that of mere substantial Christianity and godliness. Let us covet this temper of mind, and, where we see persons of real worth, and of a true latitude and largeness of spirit, commensurate to the Christian interest, that fall in with the public constitution, value and love them nothing the less, than if their judgments about these lesser things were never so exactly squared with our own, and so much more, by how much they may excel us in far greater and more valuable things. And if it be our lot to suffer under the notion of evil doers for doing what we take to be our duty, let it be according to the doctor’s wholesome counsel, with an unrepining patience, and with much thankfulness both to God and our rulers, that we have enjoyed so much tranquillity; and with that cheerfulness that becomes those that expect a blessed eternity; and to be translated ere long into a pure and peaceful region, where we are to serve God, in society even with many of them who have been offended with us, without scruple or trouble to ourselves or them. If with such dispositions and aims we persist in our course, while our case is attended with such circumstances as now it is; I have no fear, I sincerely profess to you, of our acceptance with God, and, sooner, or later, with all good men.”

Howe.

NOTE (2) PAGE 24.—Those who are accustomed either to make light of the public ordinances of religion, or on the most futile grounds to absent themselves from the services of the sanctuary, will find their conduct, in reference to this

point, sketched with a strong and characteristic touch in the following remarks of Dean Swift—a writer seldom classed among those, who would be “righteous overmuch.”—
 “There is one moral disadvantage to which all preaching is subject, that those who, by the wickedness of their lives, stand in greatest need, have usually the smallest share; for either they are absent on the account of idleness, or spleen, or hatred to religion—or in order to doze away the intemperance of the week; or, if they do come, they are sure to employ their minds rather any other way, than regarding or attending to the business of the place.

“There is no excuse so trivial, that will not pass upon some men’s consciences to excuse their attendance upon the public worship of God. Some are so unfortunate as to be always indisposed on the Lord’s day, and think nothing so unwholesome as the air of a church. Others have their affairs so oddly contrived, as to be always unluckily prevented by business. With some it is a great mark of wit and deep understanding to stay at home on *Sundays*. Others, again, discover strange fits of laziness, that seize them particularly on that day, and confine them to their beds. Others are absent out of mere contempt of religion. And, lastly, there are not a few who look upon it as a day of rest, and therefore claim the privilege of their cattle, to keep the Sabbath day by eating, drinking, and sleeping, after the toil and labour of the week. Now, in all this the worst circumstance is, that these persons are such whose companies are most required, and who stand most in need of a physician.”

NOTE (3) PAGE 25.—There are many persons, who are willing to acknowledge the duty of worshipping God in their private and individual capacity, but are by no means disposed practically to recognize the obligation of a regular attendance in his house. Those, who are prepared to submit to the authority of scripture, it is quite enough to remind of the express and unequivocal direction of the Apostle.—
 “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.” Such as may be accustomed to view the subject in the light of reason and natural religion, may

peruse with advantage the observations of Lord Kaimes on the duty and benefit of public worship.—"The obligation we are under to worship God, or to walk humbly with him, is founded on the two great principles of gratitude and obedience, both of them requiring fundamentally a pure heart, and a well-disposed mind. But heart-worship is alone not sufficient: there are over and above required external signs, testifying to others the sense we have of these duties, and a firm resolution to perform them. That such is the will of God, will appear as follows. The principle of devotion, like most of our other principles, partakes of the imperfection of our nature; yet however faint originally, it is capable of being greatly invigorated by cultivation and exercise. Private exercise is not sufficient. Nature, and consequently the God of nature, require public exercise or public worship: for devotion is infectious, like joy or grief, and by mutual communication in a numerous assembly is greatly invigorated. A regular habit of expressing publicly our gratitude and resignation, never fails to purify the mind, tending to wean it from every unlawful pursuit."

SKETCHES OF THE HISTORY OF MAN.

"We worship God, we praise and pray to him: not because we think that he is proud of our worship, or fond of our praise or prayers, and affected with them as mankind are, or that all our services can contribute in the least degree to his happiness or good: but because it is good for us to be so disposed towards God; because it is just and right, and suitable to the nature of things, and becoming the relation we stand in to our supreme Lord and Governor."

BISHOP BERKELEY.

NOTE (4) PAGE 35.—"The Divine Being is the only one of these objects (the unseen objects of faith,) which a Christian would wish it possible to contemplate without the aid of imagination, and every reflective man has felt how difficult it is to apprehend even this object without the intervention of an image."

FOSTER.

The supposed existence in the human mind of an innate idea of a Supreme Being, was considered at one period, and

by one sect of philosophers, to be a decisive and adequate proof that there is a God. The difficulties connected with the attempt to form a distinct conception of Deity, without associating that idea with images utterly unworthy of the divine nature, and the consequent danger of resting the whole evidence of his existence on a mere vague and imperfect notion, formed independently of the light of revelation, or any process of rational deduction are, however, sufficiently apparent from the opinions expressed by the following profound investigators of the philosophy of this important question. A general impression of some superior Being, indeed, may be considered as almost co-extensive with human nature, and, although not innate in any distinct and specific form, can hardly fail to be called forth in the progressive developement of the faculties of the mind. So far it may fairly be considered as a collateral branch of the evidence of the existence of Deity; but this affects not the question of the difficulty of forming a correct idea of his nature as a purely spiritual Being.

“How far the idea of a most perfect Being, which a man may frame in his mind, does, or does not prove the existence of a God, I will not here examine. For in the different make of men’s tempers and application of their thoughts, some arguments prevail more on one, and some on another, for the confirmation of the same truth. But yet, I think, this I may say, that it is an ill way of establishing this truth, and silencing Atheists, to lay the whole stress of so important a point as this, upon that sole foundation, and take some men’s having that idea of God in their minds, (for ’tis evident some men have none, and some worse than none, and the most very different,) for the only proof of a Deity; and out of an overfondness for that darling invention, cashier, or at least endeavour to invalidate all other arguments, and forbid us to hearken to those proofs, as being weak, or fallacious, which our own existence, and the sensible parts of the universe, offer so clearly, and cogently to our thoughts, that I deem it impossible for a considering man to withstand them. For I judge it as certain and clear a truth, as can any where be delivered,

that the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power, and God-head." LOCKE.

"As for the existence of such a Being, how it comes to be known unto us, or by what means we are assured of it, is not so unanimously agreed upon, as that it is. For although some have imagined that the knowledge of a Deity is connatural to the soul of man, so that every man hath a connate inbred notion of a God; yet I rather conceive the soul of man to have no connatural knowledge at all, no particular notion of any thing in it from the beginning; but being we can have no assurance of its pre-existence, we may more rationally judge it to receive the first apprehension of things by sense, and by them to make all rational collections. If then the soul of man be at the first like a fair smooth table, without any actual characters of knowledge imprinted in it; if all the knowledge which we have comes successively by sensation, instruction, and rational collection, then must we not refer the apprehension of a Deity to any connate notion or inbred opinion; at least we are assured God never chargeth us with the knowledge of him upon that account." PEARSON.

"I am not to be persuaded by metaphysical arguments; such, for instance, as are drawn from the idea of an all-perfect being, or the absurdity of an infinite progression of causes. This sort of arguments I have always found dry and jejune; and as they are not suited to my way of thinking, they may perhaps puzzle, but never will convince me." BERKELEY.

"I grant it very difficult, nay impossible, for those to have any true settled notion of a God, who search for an idea of him in their fancies, and were never conscious to themselves of any higher faculty in their souls than mere imagination. Such may have *imaginem Jovis*, or *Galeatæ Minervæ*, as he in Tully speaks, some idea of an idol in their minds, but none of a true God. For we may as soon come by the sight of colours to understand the nature of sounds, as by any corporal phantasms come to have a true idea of God. And although sometimes an idea be taken for that impression of things which is lodged in the phantasy, yet here we take it in a more general

sense, as it contains the representation of any thing in the mind; as it is commonly said in the schools that the Divine intellect doth understand things by their ideas, which are nothing else but things themselves as they are objectively represented to the understanding; so that an idea in its general sense in which we take it, is nothing else but the objective being of a thing as it terminates on the understanding, and is the form of the act of intellection: that which is then immediately represented to the mind in its perception of things, is the idea or notion of it."

STILLINGFLEET.

NOTE (5) PAGE 53.—It was well remarked by an eminent writer—"If I could create such a being as man, the first thing I should expect of him is, that he should fall down and worship me." The voice of universal history, as expressive of the practice of all nations—whether conveyed in those acts of rational and impressive adoration, which have prevailed under the successive dispensations of revealed religion, or addressed in the howls and dissonant vociferations of the savages of the North Western Continent to the great Spirit, who is supposed to rule the elements—whether uttered in the more refined idolatry of Greece and Rome, or chaunted forth amidst the splendid processions of the different avatars of oriental mythology—is but a varied echo of the principle implied in this declaration.

NOTE (6) PAGE 73.—On the practice of the ancient Greeks and of other nations, so far as his knowledge of them extended, with reference to the exercise of domestic worship, the testimony of Plato is decisive. Speaking of the means and habits prevalent among them, which appeared calculated to instill into the minds of their children an early knowledge of their Gods, he remarks—*ανατέλλοντός τε ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης καὶ πρὸς δυσμᾶς ἰόντων, προσκυλίσεις αἷμα καὶ προσκυνήσεις ἀκμῶντες τε καὶ ὀρῶντες Ἑλλήνων καὶ Βαρβάρων πάντων ἐν συμφορᾷ πάντοιας ἐχόμενων καὶ ἐν εὐπραγίαις, οὐχ ὡς οὐκ ὄντων ἀλλ' ὡς ὅτι μάλιστα ὄντων καὶ ἑδάμη ὑποψίαν ἐνδιδόντων ὡς οὐκ εἰσι Θεοί.*—"When at the rising and setting of the sun and moon, they observe the prostrations and adorations of all the Greeks and Barbarians, whether they be in prosperity or adversity, it can hardly be otherwise than that they should be impressed with a conviction that the Gods really exist."

DE LEGIBUS.

NOTE (7) PAGE 83.—A remarkable instance of sanctifying a family meeting, and of ratifying afresh the domestic contract by a solemn act of divine service, occurs in the case of Moses and his father-in-law Jethro, recorded in the book of Exodus. Of the practice of confirming leagues of peace, and oaths of reconciliation, by unitedly offering sacrifices on the altar, the whole of heathen antiquity abounds with examples, which must be familiar to the memory of every classical scholar. So general was this custom among them, indeed, that *ορκια τεμνειν*—to cut agreements made by oath, became the ordinary phrase to express the process of making a treaty. Besides numerous cases of this description mentioned by Homer, there is a striking instance recorded by Plutarch, relating to the league, which had been proposed and mutually agreed upon between Pyrrhus, Cassander, and Lysimachus. — “Λοιδόρησας δὲ τῶν Λυσιμάχου ὁμῶς ἐποίησεν τῶν εὐχῶν καὶ συνέσται ὡς κατὰ σφαιρίων ὀρκυμοσθέντες.”—“Having reproached Lysimachus for his treachery, he nevertheless, consented to make peace; and they met for the purpose of ratifying it by oath over the sacrifices.

LIFE OF PYRRHUS.

NOTE (8) PAGE 84.—The most suitable and edifying mode of performing this important duty is, perhaps, to read a portion of scripture, which should be briefly expounded and applied. Where there may be a want of adequate ability to go through this simple exercise, it would be well to select a few pointed remarks from some practical commentator. The present Bishop of Chester has recently published a portion of the New Testament, with an exposition admirably adapted for domestic worship, and it is hoped that his Lordship will proceed still farther with this useful and excellent work. This should be followed by a simple, scriptural, and appropriate prayer. If there be a feeling of incompetency to perform the duty without such aid, the manuals of Jenks or Cotterill, or a selection from the prayers of the church, under a slight modification, will be found well calculated for the purpose.

NOTE (8) PAGE 89.—Some very strange and unauthorized notions respecting the successive periods of creation, have been suggested by certain speculative adherents of a department of inquiry which as yet can hardly be considered to have

passed the age of infancy— notions, which appear calculated at least greatly to embarrass, if not entirely to explode every principle of legitimate interpretation as applied to the Mosaic cosmogony. When we see these theorists extending their “line of things” into a series of incalculable amount and duration, each distinguished by its appropriate order of physical formation and animated existence, in utter disregard of the definite declarations of Him, who gave nature its being, and all its properties, we can only place their visionary eras on a level with the long-winded epochs of Hindoo Chronology. To “purblind sciolists” of this description, as they have been justly called, the sublime appeal addressed to the patriarch out of the whirlwind may well be directed.—“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest, or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof?”

Revealed truth should never be thrust into needless opposition to the clear and unequivocal disclosures of demonstrative and experimental science; for it is impossible that they should be really at variance. Whenever these oracles seem to contravene each other, there must be some mistake in the interpretation. Within what precise latitude the words of Moses are to be understood as expressive of the original process of the creation, and arrangement of the material universe, may be a subject of calm and deliberate inquiry, but it is certain that geology has hitherto discovered nothing, which would supersede their natural and obvious construction. Those, who have been somewhat too ready to admit the contrary, should be reminded, in the nervous language of Horsley, relating to this question—that “it is one thing to write a history, and quite another to compose riddles.” That these views are perfectly accordant with all that philosophy has hitherto brought to light in this interesting field of observation, is

sufficiently apparent from the following lucid and convincing statement of Dr. Ure. The whole question of geological formations, in fact, resolves itself into this—not what period the present powers of nature, if left to their ordinary operation, would require to produce such results, but to what extent those powers were employed or modified in the primordial arrangements of the universe, and on this point we have no definite information beyond what is contained in the inspired volume.

“Many speculative writers have considered the record of Moses as referring merely to the origin of the human race, without at all defining the epoch at which either the earth or the system of the world was made. This opinion seems quite incompatible with the direct and obvious meaning of his narrative of Creation. The demiurgic week, as it is called, is manifestly composed of six working days like our own, and a day of rest, each of equal length, and therefore containing an evening and a morning, measured by a rotation of the earth round its axis. That this rotation did at no former period, differ materially in duration from the present length, has been shown by Laplace in his *Système du Monde*. Hence it is to be regretted that any commentators of Scripture, misled by the fancied necessity of certain geological schemes of strati-form superposition, should have vexed themselves and their readers, in torturing the Hebrew words for day, and evening, and morning, into many mystical renderings. That Moses attached no such vague meaning to the creative days in Genesis, is evident from the language of the fourth commandment in Exodus. “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work, but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt *not* do any work . . . for in six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” Here, as every where else, the Bible is its best interpreter, and will always enable any man of common sense and unbiassed judgment, to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, while the dupe of critical refinement is stumbling in a labyrinth of Hebrew roots.

"We may, moreover ask, why we should claim in behalf of our globe, a more ancient origin than that assigned by the inspired chronologist? Will its rank, dignity, and importance, be enhanced by a remote genealogy? Is this a taint of the pride of ancestry, common to the whole family of man? But how can it be safely gratified? Even lynxeyed science can pierce the dark veil of creation no further than common vision. Her telescopic glasses, which pierce farthest into space, have no time-penetrating power whatsoever.

"That Geometry can carry the eye far into the future and the past, is a mere verbal fallacy. It can enable us to calculate the relative positions of spherical masses, revolving at certain rates in certain orbits for a series of ages; but it reveals nothing about the condition of these masses, in time past or future, far less as to their origin. Had we been told that Deity, in the beginning, created a chaos out of which symmetry was to be educes through a long series of material transmutations, then philosophy might have proffered her conjecture concerning the order of evolution; but ancient chaos is merely a mythological fiction, disavowed alike by the word and wisdom of God. The pristine reign of elemental strife and confusion under that "Anarch old," is inconsistent with the Government of Omnipotence. Chaos is, in fact, a dogma borrowed by Pythagoras from the Persian Magi, representing the eternal war that was waged between Ormuzd and Ahriman (Oromasdes, and Arimanius) the uncreated principles of good and evil, of light and darkness. Had these two contending powers been equal, as they were diametrically opposite in every aim and effort, then reciprocal counteraction must have resulted, the equilibrium of death. Thus nothing could be, for nothing would have been suffered to exist. It is marvellous how Doctors of Divinity dared to introduce the heathen and atheistical absurdity of a Chaos into their commentaries on the Mosaic record of creation. With regard to the antiquity of our earth, nothing can be known except what the Eternal Spirit has deigned to reveal. *Itaque salutare admodum est, si mente sobria fidei tantum dentur, quæ fidei sunt.*"

NOTE (9) PAGE 103.—The observance of the Sabbath as a

question of legislative enactment, has been recently discussed in an admirable pamphlet by Mr. Conder, reprinted from the *Ecclectic Review*.

NOTE (10) PAGE 116.—It was remarked by Bishop Horsley, that in his day “an opinion had been for some time gaining ground, that the observation of a sabbath in the Christian church is a matter of mere consent and custom, to which we are no more obliged by virtue of any divine precept, than to any other ceremony of the Mosaic law.” From that period I fear that this opinion—dangerous and groundless as it appears to be—has extended still more widely. It has recently received the sanction, in an aggravated degree, of a writer, from whose character and station better things might have been expected. Nothing, however, in the form of novelty or originality has been added to the evidence, on which it was founded, that could retrieve it from the complete and overwhelming confutation it received from the masterly pens of Horsley and Milner and others, who took part in the controversy. “It is a gross mistake, says the first of these distinguished writers, to consider the sabbath as a mere festival of the Jewish church, deriving its whole sanctity from the Levitical law. The contrary appears, as well from the evidence of the fact, which sacred history affords, as from the reason of the thing, which the same history declares. The religious observation of the seventh day hath a place in the decalogue among the very first duties of natural religion. The reason assigned for the injunction is general, and hath no relation or regard to the particular circumstances of the Israelites, or to the particular relation in which they stood to God as his chosen people. The creation of the world was an event equally interesting to the whole human race; and the acknowledgment of God as our Creator, is a duty in all ages and in all countries, equally incumbent upon every individual of mankind.”

Among the later treatises which have undertaken to vindicate the authority of the sabbath, those of Dr. Burder, Mr. Gurney, and especially that of the Rev. Daniel Wilson, may be mentioned as having ably and satisfactorily discussed the question. The author's own dissertations, according to his

usual practice of composition, were written before he had perused any one of these. But he is not sorry to find that his line of argument and illustration in many respects, as was naturally to be expected, concurs with theirs. He cannot resist the temptation of adding the following testimony to the benefits of a due observance of the sabbath, alluded to in a former page, from the venerable and illustrious Chief Justice Hale, in whom

“ Our British Themis glories with just cause.”

“ I have by long and sound *experience* found, that the due observance of this day, and of the duties of it, have been of singular confort and advantage to me ; and I doubt not but it will prove so to you. God Almighty is the Lord of our time, and lends it to us, and it is but just we should consecrate this part of that time to him ; so I have found by a strict and diligent observation, that a due observation of the duty of this day, hath ever had joined to it, a blessing upon the rest of my time ; and the week that hath been so begun, hath been blessed and prosperous to me ; and on the other side, when I have been negligent of the duties of this day, the rest of the week hath been unsuccessful and unhappy to my own secular employments ; so that I could easily make an estimate of my successes in my own secular employments the week following, by the manner of my passing of this day : and this I do not write lightly or inconsiderately, but upon a long and sound observation and experience.”

NOTE (11) PAGE 111.—Nothing is more certain than the prevalence of this ordinance during the first centuries of the Christian era, as the writings of Tertullian, of St. Cyprian, and St. Cyril, and others of the early fathers testify. It very soon degenerated, indeed, like the other sacrament, into a superstitious observance, and very extravagant and often heretical notions were engrafted upon it. But this derogated not in the slightest degree from its authority as a divine institution, nor from its import as a symbolic exhibition of that process of internal purification, without which no one shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. The views entertained of the importance of baptism, as well as of the propriety of its

application to infants, even before they had attained the age, at which circumcision was allowed to be administered, are forcibly stated in an epistle of one of the most distinguished fathers of the third century.—“Quantum vero ad causam infantium pertinet, quos dixisti intra secundum aut tertium diem, quo nati sunt, constitutos, baptizari non oportere, et considerandam esse legem circumcisionis antiquæ, ut intra octavum diem eum qui natus est baptizandum et sanctificandum non putares, longe aliud in concilio nostro omnibus visum est. In hoc enim quod tu putabas esse faciendum nemo consensit, sed universi potius judicavimus nulli hominum nato misericordiam Dei et gratiam denegandam.” CYPRIAN.

NOTE (12) PAGE 162.—The import of the baptismal form, as originally addressed by Christ to his apostles, is thus accurately expanded in an able and convincing little Treatise, on the “Obligatory nature of the sacraments on scriptural principles, by the Rev. George Bliss.”—Go ye among Jews and Gentiles, and proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the true Messiah, anointed of God with a fulness of grace, and of the Spirit without measure, and sent to be the Saviour and Redeemer of the world. Go ye among those who have never known the true God, nor heard of the name of Jesus Christ. Go and “turn them from dumb idols to serve the living and true God,” “turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of their sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me.” Go, and in the power of my grace, (for lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,) achieve this great, this glorious, this indispensable work; and having gathered them into my school, and made them my disciples, admit them by the significant rite of baptism to a public and solemn profession of the doctrines which I teach, and to the declared and assured hope of the blessings which I promise; “*baptizing them*” as believers “*in the name of the Father*,” who receives all those who come to him “*washed*” by the Son, and “*sanctified*” by the Spirit; “*of the Son*,” whose “*blood cleanseth from all sin*,” “*and of the Holy Ghost*,” whose influence shall be shed

abundantly on those who believe. Go, and thus do the work of Evangelists and Apostles; nor let your labours terminate here; but carry on the work you have begun, and having taught them to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and upon an intelligent profession of repentance and faith baptize them in this name, instruct them more fully in the nature of their new relations, "*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*"

The use of this form as deemed essential to the validity of baptism in the second and following centuries of the Christian era is unquestionable. In his account of the first of these periods, Mosheim relates that "those, who were to be baptized (after other ceremonies and confessions,) were received into Christ's kingdom, by a solemn invocation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the express command of our blessed Saviour." The bearing of this remarkable phraseology upon the fundamental doctrine of the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit, is, according to the view of Dr. Dwight, exceedingly powerful and decisive. "In the commission here given by Christ to his Apostles, it is impossible, that an attribute should, with propriety or meaning, be joined with persons; or a creature with one or more Divine persons. No absurdity can strike the mind with more force, than that Christ should direct the Apostles to baptize *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Divine Power*. Nothing but impiety can, so far as I see, be contained in a direction to baptize in the name of God, and of a creature. What creature would dare to associate himself with God in such an act of authority, and thus presume to ascend the throne of his Maker?"

NOTE (13) PAGE 165.—So far as the scriptural authority of the practice of infant baptism is concerned, the strongest evidence in its favour—an evidence in my view perfectly satisfactory and decisive—is doubtless deduced from the striking analogy it bears to circumcision under the former economy, combined with those numerous statements respecting the baptism of whole families and other circumstances, which appear palpably to involve it. If we pass on to that of the

primitive church, which carries great weight as it may be presumed, on a question of mere fact, to convey the most correct information, it would be easy to substantiate the prevalence of this practice by citations, more or less specific and express, from the writings of Justin Martyn, Irenæus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian, all living at varied periods of the three first centuries. The question, therefore, is not one of ecclesiastical usage, for in this view of it there is little or no difficulty. The circumstance, which has led many persons to doubt the divine authority of infant baptism, appears to be that the ordinance is generally associated in scripture, whenever it is mentioned, with an actual profession of faith. In cases of voluntary transition from Judaism or heathenism to Christianity, which are alone distinctly recorded in the new testament, this was obviously necessary, and is deemed equally so in the present day. From this they have been led to think that Baptism, instead of an initiatory rite of admission into the privileges of the Christian church, and a symbol of the highest spiritual blessings, was intended to be applied in those cases only, in which faith was exercised, and as infants are incapable of this, that they have no right to the ordinance. But they forget that even in the case of the adult we have no certain proof of faith ; and if baptism is not to be administered except in cases of real conversion, it is manifest that we should have no certain and absolute ground, upon which we could administer it at all. The only difference, so far as it is confined to this principle, is that the adult is admitted into the church because it is presumed that he is sincere, and the infant because it is also presumed, in dependence upon the divine promises, that in due time he shall be brought to the exercise of the same faith. Actual and known conversion is evidently not the basis of the administration of the ordinance in either case.

NOTE (14) PAGE 168 —The object of the appointment of sponsors in the primitive church, was doubtless to secure the Christian education of those who were admitted into the privileges of the church by baptism ; and although there may not be the same necessity for this office in the present condi-

tion of that church, yet as there is nothing superstitious or unscriptural in the usage, it may and unquestionably has been frequently converted, where its obligations were duly recognized, into an occasion of most important benefit. No enlightened member of our church views it in any other light than that of a part of a system of ecclesiastical institutions, bearing the sanction of a very remote antiquity. Sponsors are distinctly mentioned by Tertullian in the third century, who speaks of the awful nature of the engagements, to which they pledge themselves in behalf of those, whom they bring to the baptismal font.

NOTE (15) PAGE 176.—There is no doubt but very extravagant and unwarrantable notions of the spiritual efficacy of the sacraments, began at an early period to prevail among the ancient fathers. This arose, in some degree, from the indistinctness of language. Expressions, which at first were used metaphorically, were afterwards taken literally. Terms originally and properly designative of the inward grace, by a natural and easy transition, men gradually applied to the outward symbols. The spiritual meaning either wholly evaporated in this process of transmutation, and nothing was left but the outward form, or, if any remained, it was considered to be absolutely embodied in the figurative emblem. Thus the sacrament of the Lord's supper was deemed to be an actual participation of the body and blood of Christ, and by a similar translation of "Rhetoric into Logic," the water of baptism was supposed to be *transubstantiated* into the influence of the Holy Spirit as the instrument of regeneration. Ever since the days of Nicodemus, indeed, men have been prone to confound the literal with the metaphorical sense, or to lose the spiritual in the literal meaning of the language employed upon this subject. The language of our own church, which has been so grievously misunderstood on this point, is manifestly framed, as in other instances, on the charitable principle of supposing that the inward grace has accompanied the outward sign, as long as there is no evidence to the contrary. But when she thanks God that the subject of baptism has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, she no more means to

assert absolutely that the child has been spiritually born again than she does that every individual partaker of the elements of bread and wine in the eucharist, has been really united unto Christ by faith, when she directs her communicants to thank God that they "are very members incorporate into the mystical body of his Son." The meaning of terms, however, is conventional, and if, to avoid an apparent contradiction, that of regeneration was applied to baptism, and its invariably attendant privileges, and another equally comprehensive and intelligible, was employed to express that real change of nature, without which no one can enter into the kingdom of heaven, the integrity of Christian doctrine would remain inviolate. That, which is of paramount importance, and mainly incumbent upon us, is to impress upon men, whether baptized or unbaptized, that unless they become to all practical purposes "new creatures in Christ Jesus," outward symbols and ceremonies, however significant and authoritative, will avail them nothing.

NOTE (16) PAGE 183.—Whether baptism be performed by sprinkling or immersion, appears to be quite unimportant. In our own church provision is made for both practices, as expediency may dictate. In the primitive church the latter seems to have been most generally adopted, and, although it has fallen into desuetude in our own, this, in the majority of cases, is evidently a departure from its original intention.

NOTE (17) PAGE 229.—The original views and early practice of the Church of England, in reference to the participation of this sacred ordinance, are distinctly traced in the following historical sketch by Bishop Beveridge.

"In the first year of that pious prince (Edward the VI.) the Liturgy, or Book of Common Prayer, was first compiled; and in the second it was settled by Act of Parliament. In which book it is ordered, that the exhortation to those, who are minded to receive the Sacrament, shall be read: which is there set down, much the same that we read now. But afterwards it is said—In Cathedral Churches, or other places where there is daily communion, it shall be sufficient to read this exhortation above written once in a month. And in Parish

Churches upon the week days it may be left unsaid. Fol. 123. Where we may observe, first, that in those days there was daily communion in Cathedral Churches and other places, as there used to be in the primitive church. And accordingly I find, in the records of St. Paul's, that when the plate, jewels, &c. belonging to the said cathedral were delivered to the King's Commissioners, they, upon the Dean and Chapter's request, permitted to remain, among other things, two pair of basyns for to bring the communion bread, and to receive the offerings for the poor; whereof one pair silver, for every day, the other for festivals, &c. gilt. Dugdale Hist. of St. Paul's, page 274. From whence it is plain, that the communion was then celebrated in that church every day. And so it was even in parish churches. For otherwise it needed not to be ordered as it is in the Rubrick above mentioned, that in parish churches upon the week days the said exhortation may be left unsaid. And to the same purpose it is afterwards said, when the Holy Communion is celebrated on the work day, or in private houses, then may be omitted the Gloria in Excelsis, the creed, the homily, and the exhortation. Fol. 132.

"Next after that we quoted first, this Rubrick immediately follows: 'And if upon the Sunday or Holy day, the people be negligent to come to the communion, then shall the priest earnestly exhort his parishioners to dispose themselves to the receiving of the Holy Communion more diligently, saying,' &c. which shews that upon all Sundays and Holy days people then generally received: the church expected and required it of them. And if any minister found that his parishioners did not always come, at least upon those days, he was to exhort and admonish them to dispose themselves more diligently for it: and that by the command of the church itself; whereby she hath sufficiently declared her will and desire, that all her members should receive the communion as they did in the primitive times, every day in the week if possible: and if that could not be, yet at least every Sunday and Holy day in the year."

NOTE (18) PAGE 230.—As early as the third century, according to Dupin, the celebration of the eucharist was entitled

a sacrifice, and it was administered even to infants under the species of wine. Soon afterwards it began to be celebrated at the tombs of martyrs, and at the obsequies of the dead, which is supposed to have given rise to the masses performed in honor of the saints. It was, however, Gregory the Great, in the sixth century, whom Mosheim describes as one, "who had a marvellous fecundity of genius in inventing, and an irresistible force of eloquence in recommending superstitious observances"—it was this renowned prelate, in an institution called the canon of the mass, who overwhelmed this simple and impressive ordinance with a profusion of pompous ceremonies, which completely altered its character, and ultimately converted it into one of the most effective engines of popular delusion, and priestly craft. In passing through this degrading process of perversion and abuse, however, the ordinance has lost none of its prior obligation and inherent grandeur.

NOTE (19) PAGE 256.—That the sacrament of the Lord's supper was intended to be celebrated throughout the entire period of the Christian dispensation, is evident from the declaration of St. Paul—"As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death until He come." The whole history of the church bears witness of its uninterrupted continuance, and it will doubtless remain a standing monument of the love of Christ as long as there is a church upon earth.

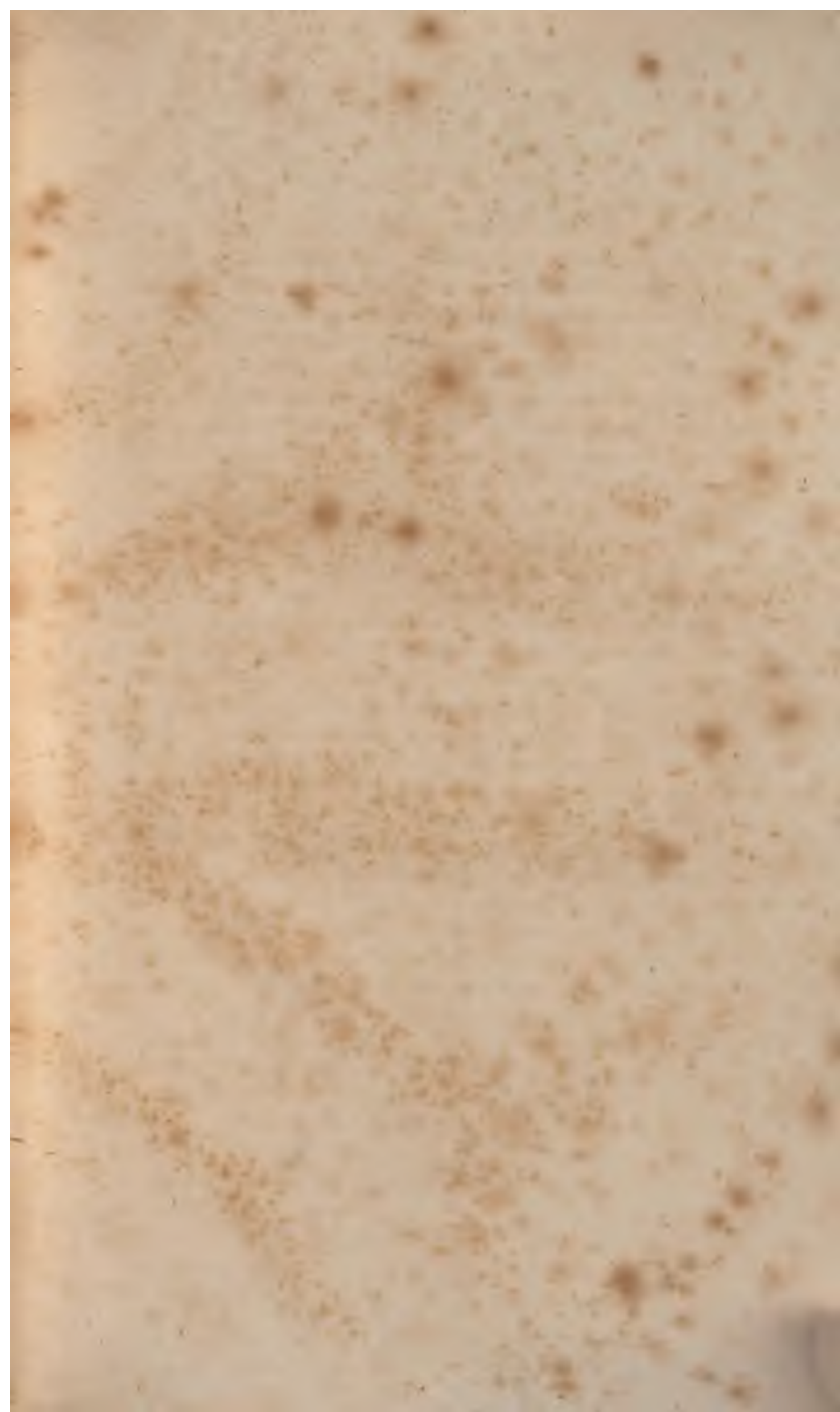
NOTE (20) PAGE 269.

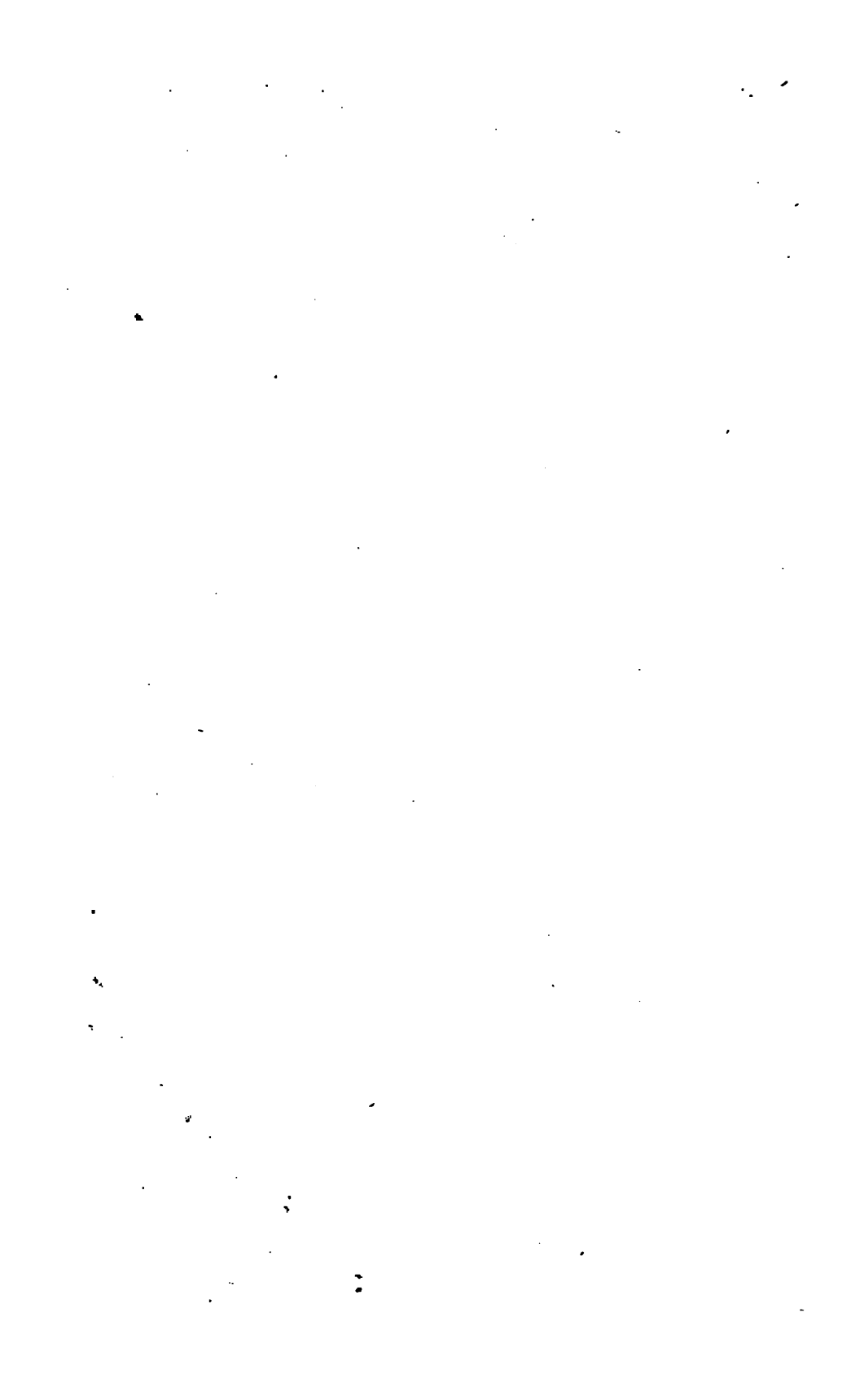
"Χερσὶ δ' ἀνθρώποισιν Διὶ λείβειν αἰθωπὰ οἶνον
 Ἀζομαι, οὐδὲ πῃ ἐστὶ κελαίνεφει Κρονίωνι
 Αἵματι καὶ λυθρῷ πεπαλαγμένον εὐχετασθαι."

I have a holy dread of pouring a libation of black wine to Jupiter with unwashed hands; nor is it right that one polluted with blood and gore, should pay his vows to the cloud-collecting son of Saturn.

HECTOR IN HOMER'S ILIAD.

FINIS.





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